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Developing Guidelines for Functional Substitutes for Ugandan Marriage Practices

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR FUNCTIONAL SUBSTITUTES

FOR UGANDAN MARRIAGE PRACTICES

by

Daniel Semakula Serunjogi

Adviser: Bruce C. Moyer

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR FUNCTIONAL SUBSTITUTES FOR UGANDAN MARRIAGE PRACTICES

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Date completed: August 2000

Problem

Since the introduction of Christianity in Uganda there has been a tension between customary and Christian marriage practices, each struggling to exist at the expense of the other. The crux of the struggle is the validity and sufficiency of customary marriage vis-a-vis Christian marriage rites. Christian youth of marriageable age have been caught in the crossfire, and marital stability has been one of the casualties of the struggle. This study suggests bridging the gap between the two practices.

Method

Biblical teaching on marriage is established through

exegesis of texts such as Gen 2:20-24, Matt 19:4-6, and 1
Cor 7. The nature and significance of Ganda customary
marriage are ascertained from various ethnologies. A
process of critical contextualization is suggested, by which
customary marriage is evaluated in the light of biblical
teaching, leading to the creation of appropriate functional
substitutes.

Conclusion

The aim of the critical contextualization approach
is to develop a marriage practice that is biblical and
authentically African, one that responds to indigenous needs
and concerns. This approach will in the long run enhance
marital stability as well as people's commitment to
Christian teaching.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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FOR UGANDAN MARRIAGE PRACTICES

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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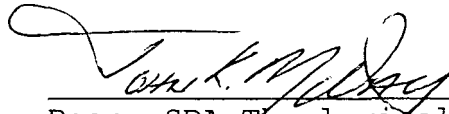
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Date approved

To my parents, Pastor and Mrs. Ephraim
Semakula, for their love and Godly
example

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop an approach
to marriage that is both Christian and authentically African
in the Ugandan setting.

Justification of the Study

There are five recognized marriage patterns in
Uganda,[1] namely: Marriage by native custom or customary
marriage, Christian marriage, civil marriage, Muslim
marriage, and Hindu marriage. Young people who are
contemplating marriage are left in a quandary regarding the
choice of a pattern of marriage. This study seeks to
educate Christian young people concerning the biblical
principles of marriage, distinctive values of Ganda
customary marriage, and how social changes have affected the
institution of marriage.

Pioneer Christian missionaries in Uganda, in
collaboration with the colonial government, suppressed

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[1]Uganda Council of Women, Laws About Marriage in
Uganda (Kampala: Uganda Publishing House, 1960), 1-5.

1

aspects of native culture[1] which they considered pagan, uncivilized, or in conflict with European ideas and codes of conduct. Native Christians were led to doubt the validity and adequacy of their traditional rites for preserving the integrity of their society. This study intends to engage Christians in Uganda in analyzing their traditions and comparing them with Scripture in order to determine what rites are compatible with their Christian faith, and so worth keeping, and what rites need to be discouraged and replaced by proper functional substitutes.

Many Christians in Uganda are ignorant of many traditional rites and are isolated from their own people. As a result, many Ugandan Christians find it difficult to witness to their non-Christian relatives who hold traditional culture in high regard. There is a need to educate Ugandan Christians about the values and adequacy of some of their traditions, including marriage.

The missionary movement of the nineteenth century, which was responsible for spreading Christianity to Africa, originated in the Western world. And this inevitably gave Christianity a Western imprint. But now that the majority of Christians live in the non-Western world, the question of making the church and the gospel relevant in diverse

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[1]Lucy Philip Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," in International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Memorandum 19 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 4-5.

cultures has become a pressing theological issue.[1] There is a need to involve non-Western Christians in serious dialogue in all areas where their Christian faith interacts with their culture.

Description of the Study

After the introduction, chapter 2 presents the biblical teaching on marriage which includes the Genesis account of the first marriage, the teachings of Christ, and the writings of Paul on marriage.

Chapter 3 describes Ganda customary marriage and the functions and significance of its various rites.

The social changes that have affected marriage in Uganda and the rest of Africa are discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 outlines three possible ways Ugandan Christians could deal with their cultural heritage, including marriage. One of those ways, the contextualizing approach, which leads to the creation of functional substitutes, is discussed in detail.

Chapter 6 concludes the study and presents a number of recommendations for the church in Uganda to consider.

Limitations

This study focuses on a specific group of people in Uganda. But the ideas proposed are deemed helpful to

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[1]David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

Christians in other parts of Uganda and the rest of Africa.

Methodology

This study is both descriptive and suggestive. The biblical teaching on marriage is established through exegesis of relevant Scriptures. The value and significance of Ganda customary marriage rites are ascertained from ethnologies and missiological literature. A limited survey was conducted of fifty Christians in Uganda from various locations, age groups, and professions, to determine their concerns and felt needs concerning marriage was conducted but not analyzed directly. Then a process is suggested through which the tenets of marriage need to be channeled in order to develop acceptable functional substitutes.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Affines: Relatives through marriage.

Bba: Luganda term for her husband.

Balo: Luganda term for your husband

Baze: Luganda term for my husband.

Bride-price/marriage payments: The payment in money or goods, the transfer of which from the man's kin to the woman's kin concludes the legal fact on which mutual matrimonial obligations are based.

Consanquinity: Relation either by blood or from a common ancestor.

Contextualization: A process by which a message or cultural form which is initially alien takes on a shape more congenial to the receptor's context.

Customary marriage: A customary marriage takes place when a man and a woman perform such rites as constitute a permanent union between such a man and woman under the traditional rules of the community to which they belong or one of them belongs.

Dowry: A payment from the bride's parents to the new couple, and stays under the control of the bride.

Endogamy: The rule that one must marry within a defined group and may not go outside it for a partner.

Exogamy: The rule that one must find a marriage partner outside one's line of descent or clan.

Extended family: A family unit that includes parents, their children, and one or more relatives. The relatives most often include grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

Ganda: A group of people who live in the central province of Uganda. The Ganda refer to themselves as Baganda (singular: muganda), and they refer to their language as Luganda.

Lobolo: Bride-price, typically of cattle, paid to a bride's father.

Matrilineal: Derivation of one's kinship through the mother.

Monogamy: The practice of being married to only one person at a time.

Muko: Luganda term for in-law.

Mukoddomi: Luganda term for brother-in-law.

Mukyala: Luganda term for lady, wife.

Okufumbirwa: Luganda term for marrying (by a woman).

Okuwasa: Luganda term for marrying (by a man).

Patrilineal: Determining one's descent through the father instead of the mother.

Polygamy: Custom of one man having more than one lawful wife at the same time.

Ssenga: Luganda term for paternal aunt.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL TEACHING CONCERNING MARRIAGE

Marriage Defined

It is not easy to find a comprehensive definition
of marriage. This study will report four different
definitions in an effort to analyze their contents to
determine the essential features of marriage. The New
Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1993) defines marriage
as

> a legally recognized personal union entered into by a
> man and a woman usually with the intention of living
> together and having sexual relations, and entailing
> property and inheritance rights.[1]

This definition is secular; it presents recognition of

the union by the law of the land as the first feature.

It mentions the sexes of the parties involved in the

union, and also speaks about property ownership as an

aspect of the union.

Ember and Ember, with an anthropological

background, defined marriage as:

> a socially approved sexual and economic union between
> a woman and a man. It is presumed, both by the
> couple and by others, to be more or less permanent,
> and it subsumes reciprocal rights and obligations

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[1]The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.
"Marriage."

between two spouses and between spouses and their future children.[1]

Additional elements of marriage that are mentioned by Ember and Ember are that it is a sexual and an economic union; it is presumed to be a permanent union; it entails rights and obligations to and by the parties involved.

Ember and Ember further amplified these elements: they pointed out that marriage is a socially approved sexual union so that the couple does not have to hide the sexual nature of their relationship. Second, although the union may ultimately be dissolved by divorce, couples in all societies begin marriage with some idea of permanence in mind. Third, the marriage relationship implies reciprocal rights and obligations between the parties. They tend to be specific and formalized regarding property, finances, and child rearing.[2]

On the other hand, Murdock explained the fact that marriage entails a sexual and an economic relationship.

> Sexual unions without economic co-operation are common, and there are relationships between men and women involving a division of labor without sexual gratification e.g. between brother and sister, master and maidservant, or employer and secretary, but marriage exists only when the economic and the sexual are united in one relationship, and this

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[1]Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, <u>Cultural Anthropology</u> (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 166.

[2]Ibid.

combination occurs only in marriage.[1]

Woolsey recognizes that marriage is the basis of society in his definition of marriage:

> is that union of a male and female being without which there could be no family, no parental care, no developed political communities, no general society of mankind.[2]

Pike, from the standpoint of a Christian writer identifies free willingness, mutual affection, mutual agreement, and exclusive relationship as other elements of marriage:

> The volunteer compact between one man and one woman based upon mutual affection, whereby they agree to live together as husband and wife, until separated by death.[3]

Marriage Defined According to Scripture

The definition of marriage is first recorded in the creation account (Gen 2:24); this is what Christ affirmed in Matt 19:4-6:

> Haven't you read, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. (NIV)

This is the sole description of a husband-wife

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[1]George P. Murdock, <u>Social Structure</u> (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 8, quoted in Ember and Ember, 166.

[2]T. D. Woolsey, "Marriage," <u>A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology</u> (1891), 3:1411.

[3]Paul H. Pike, "A Biblical Study of Marriage" (B.D. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1956), 2.

relationship to be found in Scripture. The text also describes the process of arriving at the union.   In other words, a man and a woman created as two parts of the whole, with inherent sexual desires are joined together by their Creator, through sexual union, to become one.[1]

Hebrew Words for Marriage in the Old Testament[2]

The Bible has no single word for marriage. The words translated as "marriage" do not specifically define what marriage is. They are words like "to take," "accept," "bring," "carry away," "to be master," "to have dominion over," "to be praised," "to shine," "to celebrate." All of them are translated as marriage.[3]

Laquach: The basic meaning is to take, to accept, to bring, to carry away. It is used 966 times in the Old Testament, and over 800 times it is translated "to take"; in over 100 references it refers to the taking of wives; it is translated marriage only four times. For example when Eliezer "took" Rebekah back to Isaac, Isaac brought

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[1]Lawrence J. Friesen, "Marriage: A Biblical Model in Historical Perspective" (D.Min. dissertation, Biola University, 1990), 59-62.

[2]Maurice Lamm, The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 145.

[3]See Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1936), 646, and James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), s.v. "Marriage.".

her into her mother's tent and "took" Rebekah sexually; as a result she became his wife (Gen 24:61,67). The same word is used synonymously with sexual intercourse: before the flood they "took" wives of all they chose (Gen 6:2).

Baal: The prime root means "to be master." It implies ownership or to have dominion which is by implication to be a husband. This word is used 83 times, but it is only translated "marriage" eight times; 11 times it makes reference to a husband; all other instances refer to ownership in contexts other than marriage.

Chatan: This word is used to describe the making of a marriage. It is used 63 times, and translated as "marriage" only three times.

Ishsha: This word is translated "to marry," "to celebrate," "to be praised," "to shine." It is used 46 times, but only used once in reference to marriage.

Greek Word for Marriage in the New Testament

Ginomai (Rom 7:4, KJV): The root of this word is simply "to cause to be" or "to cause to become." It is used over 1,000 times in the New Testament; it is translated marriage only three times in Rom 7. All other times it is translated as "to be," "to be made," "to come," "to pass." But at the time of translation of the King James Version of the Bible it was translated as marriage because in seventeenth-century Europe a young

man taking a young lady sexually is what made them "become" husband and wife.[1]

Marriage a Divine Institution

Bacchiocchi in his biblical study on marriage, divorce, and remarriage submits that marriage is not a human institution; it was begun by God and so He handed us principles that should govern the relationship. It was not left to man to regulate.[2]

Bromiley confirms that God is the author of the marriage union, that it corresponds to His will for the human race.[3]

God's original plan is first introduced in Gen 1:26-28: "Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply."

Three observations can be made concerning the above account as related to marriage. First, the two persons were made in the image of God. The term man is used in a generic sense to include both male and female.

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[1]Friesen, 68-70.

[2]Samuele Bacchiocchi, The Marriage Covenant: A Biblical Study on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1991), 20.

[3]Geoffrey W. Bromiley, God and Marriage (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), 3.

The text does not imply that the male was created in the image of God and the female in the image of man. Both were made in the image of God. Pike notes that the basic implication in the text is that man was made as a morally responsible being capable of rightly interpreting the meaning and significance of life, and the will of God for man.[1]

Second, the two persons were made male and female. This would enable them to form a perfect union; man and woman would come together in a sexual union that would serve as a means of propagation of their kind and unite them in love. Thus mankind's moral nature and physical nature enabled them to carry out a perfect union. They had the necessary physical qualifications to form a perfect union.[2] This point is emphasized and amplified in the Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal state-ment that though man and woman were made in the image of God, they are not the same in function: they are equal in being, in worth, but not identical in person. Their phy-siques are complementary, their functions cooperative. On their sexual differences is the family built; each contains something lacking in the other and complementary

[1]Pike, 5.

[2]Ibid., 6.

to the other; they give each other completeness.[1]

The third observation is that the male and female
were given specific instructions to be fruitful and
multiply, to replenish the earth. This shows that they
had God's approval and sanction. And as in all God's
creation He had ordained that the two kinds (male and
female) should produce fruit after their kind (Gen 1:11,
21, 22, 24, 25, 28). Reproduction of kind is one of the
divine purposes of marriage.[2]

Marriage: Made for Humanity

The Sabbath and marriage are God's gifts to man;
they were intended to provide rest and belonging. By the
first marriage God gave the human family a basic social
unity, providing a sense of belonging and giving individ-
uals in it an opportunity to develop into well-rounded
persons. The home is a setting ordained by God for the
restoration of the image of God in humanity. God
intended the home to be a place where the members could
express themselves fully; where members would find love,
belonging, and intimacy; where individual identity and
feelings of personal worth would be developed; a

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[1]Ministerial Association, General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A
Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines
(Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 296.

[2]Pike, 6.

place where the principles of Christianity would be put in practice.[1]

After the creation of man God said it was not good for the man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Adam was unique compared to all the animals God had made: there was no creature "comparable" to him. The Hebrew word neged, translated "comparable," is a noun related to the preposition that means to stand "before, in front of, opposite, corresponding to" someone or something. Adam longed for a being who would stand before him, to complement him, to correspond to him as his counterpart.[2]

Therefore God said He would make man a "help meet for him" (Gen 2:18), or a help suitable for him. Man's companion or help was to correspond to him. Each was to be suited to the other's needs. Adam's helper could not be found among the creatures God had already made: "So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him" (Gen 2:20).

Wenham further describes Adam's help as "matching him," a phrase which expresses complementality rather than identity. The help Adam longed for was not just assistance in his daily work or in procreation, though these aspects may be included, but the mutual support

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[1]Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 285, 295.

[2]Ibid., 296.

companionship provides.[1] So God instituted marriage to

provide companionship and intimate fellowship for men and

women.

What did God do to supply a help meet for Adam?

It is stated in Gen 2:21, 22 that

> the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam
> . . . and He took one of his ribs. . . . Then the
> rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made
> into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

What was the significance of the deep sleep Adam

was put into? Wenham observes that heavy sleep is often

divinely induced (as seen in Isa 29:10, 1 Sam 26:12), and

also the occasion for divine revelation (Gen 15:12; Job

4:13). Another explanation is that God's ways are

mysterious and are not for human observation.[2]

Sailhamer adds that the recipient of God's

provision sleeps while God acts, and that most likely the

purpose of sleep was anesthetic. Furthermore, man's

sleep in the face of divine activity appears to be

intended to portray a sense of passivity and acceptance

of the divine provision.[3]

It is significant to note that the woman, Adam's

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[1]Gordon J. Wenham, <u>Genesis 1-15</u>, Word Biblical
Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 68.

[2]Ibid., 69.

[3]John H. Sailhamer, <u>Genesis</u>, The Expositor's Bible
Commentary, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990),
46.

help, was made from Adam's rib. God did not choose man's companion from some other beings but from man--she was to be of the same substance as man. He did not take the substance from the man's feet that man may have an excuse to degrade and enslave or trample on her; He did not make her from the head of Adam, that the woman might assume authority over man; God made woman of substance from the man's side, near his heart, the seat of affections, that the woman might be at his side as his equal.[1]

Wenham thinks that just as the rib is found at the side of man and is attached to him, so Eve was meant to stand at Adam's side to be his helper; her soul was to be bound up with his.[2]

Marriage was not only to provide companionship and intimate fellowship for men and women; God ordained marriage also for procreation (Gen 1:28). This means that sexual union in marriage is honorable (Heb 13:4). Also according to Gen 2:25 the first couple knew no shame; they were naked but were not ashamed of their nakedness. This implies that God's plan for marriage included an intimate knowledge of the mysteries of both sexes: "And Adam knew Eve his wife" (Gen 4:1 KJV). The Scripture implies that intimate knowledge of sex life is

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[1]Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 46.

[2]Wenham, 1:69.

to be known fully only by two persons--it is an integral
part of the sacred act of marriage. If a third party
comes into this intimate knowledge, adultery is
committed.[1]

Marriage was also ordained to promote social
order and human happiness, to prevent irregular
affection, and through well-regulated families to
transmit truth, purity, and holiness from age to age.

Marriage has a part to play in humanity's redemp-
tion: it is a spiritual as well as a physical relation-
ship. The Old Testament condemned mixed marriages not so
much because of fear of racial mixture, but the interdic-
tion was aimed at preventing spiritual adulteration.[2]
Abraham made his servant Eliezar swear not to find Isaac
a wife among Canaanite women (Gen 24:3); the numerous
foreign wives of Solomon caused him to turn his heart
away from God (Neh 13:25). In the post-exilic period,
mixed marriages were severely condemned by Ezra (Ezra 9-
10) and Nehemiah (Neh 10-13). In the New Testament, Paul
warns against marriages with non-Christians (2 Cor 6:14),
and widows are advised to marry within the faith (1 Cor
7:39).

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[1]Pike, 6-7.

[2]Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Cultural Aspects of Marriage
in the Ancient World," Biblitheca Sacra 135, no. 537
(1978): 250-251.

Ancient Hebrew Marriage Customs

Hebrew marriage did not follow one pattern all the time. It was adapted to the situations in which the Hebrews found themselves during the course of their history. However, they still maintained their own peculiarity.

The Hebrews lived among a number of peoples in the Near East; they interacted in various ways with the Egyptians, Philistines, Hittites, the Aramaeans, the Hurrians, Assyrians, and Babylonians to name but a few. This intermingling influenced the Hebrew customs, mores, and laws.[1]

The second millennium B.C. was an age of migration. The Hebrews travelled broadly and were influenced by the ethnic groups they came into contact with, such as the Canaanites, Egyptians, Babylonians, and peoples of the Aegean lands. They were also influenced by Hurrians, Indo-European Hittites, and Philistines. This period is called the heroic age of Hebrew history.[2]

When the Hebrews entered Canaan, they came with a unique concept of culture which was a by-product of interaction with all the people they met in their travels. And while in Canaan the Hebrews developed yet a

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[1]Gottlieb Claire, "Varieties of Marriage in the Bible: And Their Analogues in the Ancient World" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1989), viii.

[2]Ibid., 3.

new form of culture as a result of the new social,

economic, and political conditions they experienced in

Canaan. Canaan was a crossroad for the ancient east and

west. That implies that their cultural institutions were

dynamic and rich with lots of contact with different

peoples.[1]

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Preparation for Marriage:
Age and Consent

</div>

In the Old Testament times no minimum age for

marriage is stated. However a <u>betulah</u> was an adolescent

girl of marriageable age. Marriage was arranged by the

parents; the mother could play a role (Gen 21:21; 27:46)

although the father could act alone. Although it was not

essential, the bride's consent was at times asked for

(Gen 24:5, 58). Romance was involved in some of the

matches (Gen 24:20; Judg 14:1-3; 1 Sam 18:20; Songs of

Solomon).

In the Jewish Talmud marriage was recommended for

girls at age of puberty, 12-12-1/2 years; males were

advised to marry between 14-18 years of age. Before that

age a girl could not refuse a marriage arranged by her

father. But after that age her assent was essential.[2]

The New Testament does not have reference to a

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[1]Ibid., 5.

[2]Isaac Levy, "Marriage Preliminaries," in <u>Jewish Marriage</u>, ed. Peter Elman (London: Soncino Press, 1967), 47-48.

specific minimum age for marriage, although 1 Cor 7:36
possibly concerns a father who was anxious about his
daughter having passed the age of marriage.[1] Early
Christians followed the Roman precedent: 12 was accepted
as the minimum age of marriage for girls and 14 for boys.
Christian parents selected the groom; the daughter had
the right to refuse the groom or not to marry at all.[2]

Betrothal and Gifts

In the Old Testament, fathers selected brides for
their sons (Gen 24:3; 38:6). Where the wishes of the son
were consulted the proposal was made by the father (Gen

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[1]Alternative readings of 1 Cor 7:36. One view is
that the Corinthians had asked Paul about the duty of a
father towards a daughter who was of age to marry. The
question was what he ought to do not what she ought to
do: his wishes, not hers, were paramount. This was in
accordance with the ideas of that age, and Paul did not
condemn them. S. R. Driver, Alfred Plummer, Charles A.
Briggs, eds., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the
Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 2nd ed.
(Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1914), 158.
     Gordon Fee's view is that Paul was giving a
directive for the man wanted to go through with his
marriage: "He should do as he wants. He is not sinning.
They should get married." Gordon Fee, The First Epistle
to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans
Publishing Company, 1987), 350.
     Robertson believes the Corinthians had asked Paul
about the duty of a father towards his daughter who was
old enough to get married. Paul had discussed the issue
of marriage for virgins on the grounds of expediency. In
this verse he faced the question whereby a daughter
wished to marry and there were no serious objections to
it. The father was advised to consent. Roman and Greek
fathers had the control of the marriage of their
daughters. Archibald T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the
New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 4:135.

[2]Yamauchi, 241-243.

34:4, 8; Judg 14:2); where there was no father, the
mother selected the bride for her son (Gen 21:21).
Besides the customary presents given to the bride and her
relatives (Gen 24:53), a bride-price (Mohar) was
stipulated to be paid to the father of the girl (Gen
31:15; 34:12; 1 Sam 18:23, 25; Exod 22:17); the price was
either in money (Deut 22:29) or services rendered (Gen
29:20; Josh 15:16; 1 Sam 17:25; 18:25).[1]

Betrothal in the Old Testament created a legally
binding relationship. Even before he married her, Jacob,
for example, called Rachel "my wife" (Gen 29:21, see also
Deut 22:23-24; 1 Sam 3:14).

The bride-price, however, represented compensa-
tion rather than actual purchase.[2] Examples of bride-
price payment include: Gen 34:12--Shechem was willing to
pay any price for Dinah; 1 Sam 18:25--Saul demanded a
bride-price of a hundred foreskins of Philistines for his
daughter (sometimes acts of valor were demanded in place
of bride-price, Josh 15:16-17; 1 Sam 17:25).

"Parting gifts" or dowry are mentioned in Mic
1:14 and 1 Kgs 9:16. In the latter case the Pharaoh

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[1]B. Pick, "Marriage Among Hebrews," A Religious
Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical Historical,
Doctrinal, and Practical Theology, ed. Philip Schaff
(1891), 3:1415-1416.

[2]Millar Burrows, The Basis of Israelite Marriage
(New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1938), 13-15.

presented the city of Gezer to Solomon as his daughter's dowry.

In the Rabbinic period the bride-price became nominal. The betrothal also was legally binding and could not be broken except by death or divorce.[1] Joseph, for example, shows the serious legal implications of the betrothal: When he discovered before the wedding that Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant, he wanted to divorce her on grounds of adultery (Matt 1:19).

The ketubbah was a legal document containing a statement of the obligations that the bridegroom undertook toward his bride. It was a marriage contract, a prerequisite to marriage, developed possibly during the Babylonian exile or after the return to Jerusalem. The document was instituted for the economic protection of a divorced or widowed woman. The financial obligations assumed by the husband in ketubbah were meant to serve as an impediment to hasty divorces. Under the provisions of the ketubbah the minimum amount paid to a widow or divorcee who was a virgin[2] at the time of marriage was

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[1]Yamauchi, 244-5.

[2]For importance attached to bride's virginity among the Hebrews see E. Neufeld, Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws (London: n.p., 1944), 95; quoted in Abel Isaksson, Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1965), 24-25.

If a woman was not a virgin at her marriage, she was stoned to death (Deut 22:13-21). Violation of a betrothed virgin was punished by death for both parties. But if the young lady had tried to defend herself, she was not killed (Deut 22:23-27). If a man violated a

200 zuzim (estimated at 960 grams of silver, sufficient amount to support a family for a year). If the bride was not a virgin at the time of marriage (e.g., a widow or divorcee) the amount was 100 zuzim.[1]

Celebration of Marriage

The wedding was after the betrothal (in the Rabbinic period a year intervened between the betrothal [qiddushin = consecration] and the marriage celebration).[2] On the wedding day the groom was accompanied by his friends (Matt 9:15; John 3:29) and attired in his wedding garment. He went to the house of the bride and conducted the veiled bride, accompanied by her friends, with song and dancing by the light of torches (Matt 25:1) into his father's house where the marriage feast was kept for seven days and where many friends were entertained with song and riddles. In the evening the couple was conducted to the bridal chamber, and after sexual intercourse it was ascertained whether the bride had

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virgin who was not betrothed, he had to pay the father 50 shekels of silver and marry her, and he had no right to divorce her anytime (Deut 22:28-29; Exod 22:16-17). If a husband accused his wife falsely for not having been a virgin when married he had to pay 100 shekels of silver in fines, he could not divorce the wife (Deut 22:18, 19). Neufeld further says that the high esteem of virginity was the value paid for by the bride price.

[1]The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion (1997), s.v. "Ketubbah."

[2]Yamauchi, 244-245.

preserved her virginity; if she had not, she was stoned.[1]

At What Point Was One
Considered Married?

According to Neufeld, marriage among the Hebrews was legally valid when bridal gifts were paid to the father of the bride and accepted by the bride. The woman was regarded as the man's wife from that point. But the marriage was not consummated until the bride was taken to her husband's house and had sexual intercourse with him. With women slaves and captives, marriages were arranged without any ceremonies; as long as the husband had sexual intercourse with her (Gen 30:4; Deut 21:13) it was considered a marriage.[2]

Biblical Requirements for Establishing
a Marriage

This section explores the essential biblical requirements for establishing a marriage. The discussion is based mainly on Gen 2:23-24.

Leaving

When Adam woke up from his deep sleep God introduced the partner He had created for him. As soon as Adam set eyes on Eve he broke out into poetry, according to Gen 2:23. There is parallelism between the first and second verses, and between the fourth and fifth

[1]Pick, 3:1415-1416.

[2]Neufeld, quoted in Isaksson, 25.

verses; there is a word play on "man" and "woman"--all typical features of Hebrew poetry.[1] Adam rejoiced to see a person with whom he could share intimate fellowship, one who corresponded to him mentally, physically, and spiritually, completing his incompleteness.

The first part of vs 24 states, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother. . . ." Isaksson observes that vs 24 is not a commandment but a statement of an already established fact, that a young man leaves his parents' house in order to form a new social unit with his wife.[2]

Similarly Skinner points out that vs. 24 is the observation of the narrator; it is not a prophecy nor a recommendation of monogamic marriage. The statement is an answer to the question: "What is the meaning of that universal instinct which impels a man to separate from his parents and cling to his wife?"[3]

The Hebrew word for leave עָזַב used in Gen 2:24, has three basic meanings: to "depart," to "abandon," and to "loose."[4]

Brown, Driver, and Briggs state that "forsake" is

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[1]Wenham, 70.

[2]Isaksson, 19.

[3]John Skinner, <u>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis</u>, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1930), 70.

[4]Carl Schultz, "עָזַב," <u>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</u>, 1980, 2:658.

the specific meaning for "leave" as used in Gen 2:24.[1]

Frangella notes the various usages of the word "forsake" in the Bible. First this word is used in Isa 55:7 and is about forsaking of thought and way of life. Second, Isa 54:6 speaks of one forsaken in spirit. In Prov 2:17 leave is used to show a forsaking of lifelong teaching and commitment. He concludes that "leaving" according to the above usages is not referring to a change of geographic location. When used in Gen 2:24 it refers to an intellectual, emotional, and willful separation of son or daughter from mother and father.[2]

The traditional translation of "leaving" to suggest a man moving from his parents and setting up a home elsewhere is challenged by Wineham. He argues that Israelite marriage was usually patrilocal: the man continued to live near his parents' home. It was the wife who left home to join her husband. So it is preferable to translate "leave" as "forsake." He further cautions that Israel is instructed not to forsake the poor or the covenant (Deut 12:19; 14:27; 29:24). Also God promises not to forsake Israel (Deut 31:8; Josh 1:5).

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[1]Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB), based on the lexicon ofWilliam Gesenius (1952), s.v. "עזב."

[2]Charles Frangella, "Biblical Requirements for Establishing a Marriage" (M.A. thesis, Multomah School of the Bible, 1982), 20.

So forsaking father and mother must be understood in a relative sense not an absolute sense. For example, Jesus spoke of hating father, mother, wife, and children in Luke 14:26. Therefore, on marriage a man's priorities change; before getting married his first obligations are to his parents, afterwards they are to his wife.[1]

Frangella ably summarizes the first biblical requirement of establishing a marriage that leaving is severance from mother and father by a man and a woman getting married; both are to leave their parents intellectually, emotionally, and willfully. It involves a complete break and recognition that the parents are no longer head or responsible for the man/woman and the establishment of a new social unit under the headship of the husband.[2]

The significance of "leaving" is expressed by Keil and Delitzsch by emphasizing the qualitative differences in the relationship one has with his/her parents and his/her spouse.

> By the leaving of father and mother, which applies to the woman as well as to the man, the conjugal union is shown to be a spiritual oneness, a vital communion of heart as well as body. . . . This union is of a totally different nature from that of parents and children. . . . Marriage itself, not withstanding the fact that it demands the leaving of father and

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[1]Wenham, 71.

[2]Frangella, 38-39.

mother, is a holy appointment of God.[1]

Cleaving

Sticking

The phrase "cleave unto his wife" (KJV) of Gen 2:24 is interpreted by Wineham as "sticks to his wife." He sees the phrase as suggesting both passion and permanence of marriage. For example, Shechem's love for Dinah is described as "his soul stuck to Dinah" (Gen 34:3). Also the tribes of Israel are assured that they will stick to their inheritances; in other words it will be theirs permanently (Num 36:7, 9). Israel is also urged to stick to the Lord (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5).[2]

Welded

Wheat and Wheat identify cleaving as "to be welded inseparably" so that each becomes a part of the other. Therefore, the man is to be totally committed to his wife.[3]

Clinging

Kalland explains that dābaq also carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty. Man is to cleave to his wife, Ruth clave to Naomi (Ruth 1:14) and

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[1]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The First Book of Moses, trans. James Martin, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1951), 1:90-91.

[2]Wenham, 71.

[3]Ed Wheat and Gaye Wheat, Intended for Pleasure (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1977), 17.

Solomon clave in love to his wives (1 Kgs 11:2).[1]

Wallis commenting on the use of dābaq states:

> The Hebrew root dbq is used figuratively in passages
> that have to do with relationships between people.
> . . . dbq is used in a positive sense of a man cleaving
> to his wife (Gen 2:24). . . . dbq, however, does not
> denote a sexual relationship. . . . It expresses
> rather a strong exotic or even a friendly affection
> toward someone.[2]

So to Wallis, cleave means a relationship other than sexual

union.

Commitment

Frangella summarizes this second biblical require-

ment for establishing a marriage:

> Cleaving signifies permanence. Sexual intercourse
> alone is not an adequate meaning, a better meaning is
> to be "committed," to show loyalty, trust,
> faithfulness, honesty leading to a joining or gluing of
> husband and wife. Cleaving was also found to be an
> intellectual, emotional and willful act.[3]

Furthermore, Frangella argues that when Gen 2:24 is

compared to the context of Ruth 1:11-17, it is evident that

"cleave" means to intellectually, emotionally, and

willfully cling or adhere to another in the form of a

relationship. He also observes that the text in Gen 2:24

uses cleaving and leaving together; whereby leaving is seen

as a woman or man severing their relationship from parents,

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[1]Earl S. Kalland, "dabaq," Theological Wordbook of
the Old Testament, ed. by R. Laird Harris, 1980, 1:178.

[2]Halle G. Wallis, "dabaq," Theological Dictionary
of the Old Testament, 1964-74, 3:79-84.

[3]Frangella, 38-39.

and cleaving is viewed as a man and woman committing

themselves to one another to form a new relationship.[1]

Becoming One Flesh

Brown, Driver, and Briggs translate flesh <u>bāsār</u>

as kindred or blood-relations[2] linking that meaning to Gen

2:23-24.

According to Schweizer, flesh is for external and

visible corporeality denoting the sphere of human

relations.[3]

Lynch adds that the term <u>bāsār</u> comes from a root

meaning muscular tissue or skin. However, the real meaning

is the totality of the person and never flesh in

distinction from the entire being.[4]

Oswalt describes <u>bāsār</u> as referring to more than

just physical flesh:

> In Hebrew the word refers basically to animal muscula-
> ture, but by extension it can mean the human body,
> blood relations, mankind, living things, life itself
> and created life as opposed to divine life. . . . In
> this way to refer to someone as being of one's own
> 'flesh and bone' (Gen 2:23) was to say more than they
> shared the same bodily heritage. Again, to say that a
> man and woman become one flesh in the sexual embrace

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[1]Ibid., 23.

[2]Brown, <u>BDB</u>, s.v. " בָּשָׂר ."

[3]G. Schweizer, " σάρξ ," <u>Theological Dictionary of
the New Testament</u>, 1964-74, 17:99-151.

[4]W. E. Lynch, "Flesh," <u>Catholic Encyclopedia</u> (New
York: McGraw Hill, 1967) 5:961.

(Gen 2:24) is to say more than that they are united bodily.[1]

Thiselton compares "flesh" in the Old Testament and "flesh" in the New Testament, but explains the use in full in relation to Gen 2:24:

> 'sarx mia' (Matt 19:56) has a special significance as the translation of the Hebrew 'basar ehal' (one flesh) of Genesis 2:24. The union of man and woman (marriage) creates a new relationship. 'One flesh' does not in the first instance mean sexual inter-course, though it includes it. It signifies the coming into being of a unitary existence, a complete partnership of man and woman which cannot be broken up without damage to the partners in it. . . . This complete partnership is the promise of marriage. . . . It is the meaning . . . granted by God.[2]

Psychosomatic Union

F. F. Bruce offers a more inclusive interpretation of flesh according to 1 Cor 6:16:

> One body: a variation on the 'one flesh' of Genesis 2:24 probably because the body is the explicit subject of the immediately preceding sentence. In any case, a psychosomatic union, not a merely physical one, is implied.[3]

Thus F. F. Bruce relates "flesh" to the whole person, but his emphasis is "one flesh" specifically referring to a psychosomatic union.

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[1]John N. Oswalt, "בָּשָׂר," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Watke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:136.

[2]A. C. Thiselton, "Flesh," New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT), ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:678.

[3]F. F. Bruce, I and II Corinthians, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 54.

Human Self at the Point of Decision

Barret supports Bruce's idea of one flesh referring to the whole person in 1 Cor 6:16, but he goes on to add an interesting dimension:

> The word 'body' might seem at first sight to have suited Paul's argument better than 'flesh', but he quotes Genesis 2:24, and in fact derives from it the means of taking an important step forward. In this anthropology 'body' is a neutral term in that it represents the human self at the place of decision. It may be the servant of sin, or the servant of righteousness. If one places his body at the disposal of a harlot, and so becomes one body with her, the body has taken the wrong turning and becomes flesh, which for Paul has often . . . a bad sense, signifying human nature perverted . . . not perverted because it is material but because as a totality it has fallen away from God and is living anthropocentrically.

Kinship Formula

The verses that Adam uttered when he first saw Eve: "This is now bone of my bones; and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23) were the traditional Hebrew kinship formula, affirms Wenham. When Laban met Jacob his nephew, for example, he said "you are my bone and my flesh" (Gen 29:14; see also Judges 9:2, 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12-14).

Whereas in English "blood relationships" are spoken of, in Hebrew one's relatives were referred to as one's "flesh and bone," which can be easily related to woman's creation from the rib; she literally came from Adam's bone.

Wenham further observes that the fact that Adam recognized Eve as his kin set the two apart from the animals. Adam did not call them his kin when he saw them.

Adam and Eve were equal humans.[1]

Similarly, marriage creates a kinship (flesh and bone) relation between man and wife. They become related to each other, the woman becomes on marriage a sister to the husband's brothers, a daughter to her father-in-law.[2] Becoming one flesh therefore does not necessarily imply sexual union in marriage or the children born during marriage--though these are important in the process of becoming one flesh.

One Personality

Davidson suggests that becoming one flesh in marriage means becoming one personality. He contends that flesh is just the medium through which the whole personality communicates its varied emotions, longings, and joys.[3] He cites Ps 84:2 to support his proposal: "My soul longs, yes even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." He views "heart and flesh" as literally referring to the "whole being."

Summary of Biblical Concept of Marriage

Gen 2:24 reveals that there are three aspects to a

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[1]Wenham, 70.

[2]Ibid., 71.

[3]Robert Davidson, <u>Genesis 1-11</u>, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 38.

man and woman becoming married: "leaving," "cleaving," and "becoming one flesh."

Leaving is severance from mother and father by man and woman, no longer depending on them emotionally and economically, in order to form a new social unit under the headship of the husband. Leaving parents does not mean abandoning them; the man and woman continue to love, respect, and care for their parents. But they do not depend on their parents for care.

A leaving must occur before cleaving can take place. All lesser relationships must be left for the purpose of cementing the new relationship. Cleaving reflects the concept of covenant fidelity. The Hebrew word for cleave, dabaq, suggests the idea of permanently being glued or joined together. Cleaving means wholehearted commitment to one's spouse, that spills over into all areas of life. Cleaving involves unswerving loyalty to one's marital partner.[1]

Leaving and cleaving result in a union that the Bible calls a mystery (Eph 5:31, 32); it is oneness in the full sense. At the onset this oneness refers to the physical union, but it goes beyond that to include an intimate bond of mind and emotions: the married couple shares a deep intimacy.

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[1]Bacchiocchi, 27-28.

On becoming "one flesh" Walter Trobisch had this to

say:

> Two persons share everything they have, not only their
> bodies, not only their material possessions, but also
> their thinking and their feeling, their joy and their
> suffering, their hopes and their fears, their successes
> and their failures. To become one flesh means that two
> persons become completely one with body, soul, and
> spirit, and yet they remain two different persons.[1]

However, Swindoll cautions that becoming one flesh

is a gradual process:

> Becoming one flesh suggests a process, not an instant
> fact. Two people with different backgrounds,
> temperaments, habits, scars, feelings, parents,
> educational pursuits . . . don't . . . leave a wedding
> ceremony in perfect unity. The process begins there.[2]

Brown in agreement with Swindoll says that the kind

of relationship which leads to one flesh has to be

cultivated; it is "a process, a state which is built slowly

over the years."[3]

Biblical Principles of Marriage as Exemplified in the New and Old Testaments

The Bible does not have one word for marriage. The

words translated as "marriage" were words denoting "to

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[1]Walter Trobisch, I Married You (New York: Harper
and Row, 1971), 18.

[2]Charles Swindoll, Strike the Original Match
(Portland: Multhomah Press, 1980), 31.

[3]Stanley C. Brown, God's Plan for Marriage
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 74.

take," "accept," "bring," "carry away," "to be master," "to have dominion over."[1]

As a result of this lack of definition, the emphasis must be put on the process of "becoming" as Paul uses it (ginomai) in Rom 7:3, 4. The Hebrew root of this word means "to cause to be" or "to become." In other words, biblical marriage is arrived at by taking sexually and in taking to become one flesh.[2]

Marriage in the Pre-Flood Era

Before the giving of the Law to Moses there were no recorded principles which constituted a husband/wife relationship. Knowledge of these principles must have been verbally transmitted from generation to generation.[3]

It is recorded in Gen 4:1 (KJV) that Cain "knew" his wife and she conceived. In the context, the word "knew" and sexual intercourse are synonymous. The New International Version (NIV) says "Cain 'lay' with his wife and she became pregnant" (Gen 4:17).

Gen 4:19 (KJV) states that Lamech "took" wives. According to the context, "taking" wives and becoming married, or becoming husband and wife, are synonymous. The NIV translates the verse as "Lamech married two wives."

It is evident from the record that sexual

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[1]Lamm, 145.

[2]Friesen, 143-144.

[3]Ibid., 135-136.

intercourse as a pre-requisite for becoming husband and wife was an accepted practice in the pre-flood era.

The Bible says that prior to the flood man's wickedness was great (Gen 6:5). Sexual immorality was rife. Men were finding women attractive and had sex with as many as they desired. God was angry at them not because they had sex with women, but because such sexual "taking" was meant by God to be the pre-requisite for a husband/wife relationship (Gen 2:24). But these sexual bondings lacked commitment. In other words, the principle—sexual intercourse plus commitment equals marriage—was violated and replaced by immorality, which is sexual intercourse without commitment.

If the term "marriage" is used to refer to the activities of the pre-flood residents, it can be concluded that those were "marriages" without commitment. They were not true husband/wife relationships, which can come into being only through sexual intercourse with commitment.[1]

Betrothal and Marriage in the Time of Abraham

During Abraham's time a girl was considered an adult at 12-1/2 years of age. By that age most girls were betrothed. Once a girl was betrothed, bride-price was agreed on, the girl was offered gifts, and her acceptance of these gifts meant that she had accepted the man to be

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[1]Ibid., 137-139.

her husband. After payment of the bride-price the couple
would retire to the bridal chamber and sexually consumate
the marriage.[1]

The story is recorded in Gen 24. Abraham sent
Eliezer his servant to the land of his kindred, to choose a
wife for Isaac. Rebekah accepted the gifts from Eliezar
signifying that she accepted the betrothal offer. A few
days later she was carried away to become Isaac's wife. As
the caravan approached Abraham's tents Isaac was seen
coming toward the caravan. When Rebekah was told that
Isaac was to be her husband, she veiled her face according
to the custom. The veil would be removed after the
marriage was consumated. When Rebekah alighted from the
camel, Isaac led her into his mother's tent and "took" her
sexually, and she became his wife.

This was marriage in God's sight: commitment sealed
with sexual union.[2]

Marriage in the New Testament

What were the requirements according to the Torah
for a man and woman to live together as husband and wife?
The first requirement was the betrothal or "kiddushin,"
which was followed by a wedding after the betrothal
contract.

A man became betrothed to a girl by paying the

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[1]Lamm, 146.

[2]Friesen, 142.

bride-price, or by drawing a betrothal contract, or by sexual intercourse. When the bride-price had been paid, and when a betrothal contract was agreed upon, the woman became a wife of the man who betrothed her, though no wedding ceremony or sexual consummation had yet taken place. Or the couple was considered husband and wife through sexual intercourse.[1]

According to the story in Matt 1:18-25 Mary was betrothed to Joseph and was considered Joseph's wife. When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he assumed that she had broken the betrothal vow. However, when Joseph was informed by an angel that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit, and that he should not put her away, he accepted her as his wife.

How did the Jewish community see Mary's pregnancy since no wedding ceremony had been done? Did they look at it as a result of sexual involvement without a wedding? According to the Torah, Joseph and Mary had met the requirements for marriage: A betrothal contract had been drawn, and as far as they were concerned sexual union had already taken place between Joseph and Mary. So they were considered husband and wife. They could forfeit the wedding celebration, since the wedding was a celebration of sexual consumation.

Mary and Joseph also met the biblical requirements

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[1]Ibid., 163.

for marriage: Life commitment as symbolized by the

engagement contract.[1]

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[1]Ibid., 165.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDA

CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

The form of customary marriage practiced by the
Ganda people consists of a number of rites and ceremonies.
This study deals with how the essential rites and
ceremonies unfolded.

Choice of a Partner

In traditional Ganda society, it was the parents'
duty to select suitable marriage partners for their
children.[1] Young men depended on their older relatives for
the marriage payments, so their approval of a marriage
partner was necessary. It was also regarded as respectable
behavior for sons to discuss their marital plans with their
parents. The parents were counted on to give their sons
the right advice regarding matrimonial customs and
ceremonies.[2] So parents of young marriageable men searched
out a young girl whom they thought would make a suitable
wife for their son, and they asked her parents for her

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[1]Ekibiina ky'olulimi Oluganda, <u>Kabbo ka Muwala</u>
(Kampala: M. K. School Supplies, 1991), 7.

[2]Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," 16.

hand in marriage to their son.

But for young men, alternative approaches to getting marriage partners were also acceptable. A young man having met a young woman who pleased him told his parents that he loved her, then his parents would go ahead and contact the woman's parents and ask if their son could marry her.[1] Or a young man approached a woman directly, maybe with a gift. If she accepted the gift, he would address her brother and ask for his sister's hand in marriage. The woman's brother would inform his parents, and if inquiries about the suitor proved satisfactory, the suitor would be asked to take beer and a bark cloth and meet the young woman's parents.[2]

Young marriageable women were more dependent on their parents for choice of a marriage partner. They mostly waited to be proposed to, but there were cases where their parents selected young men they felt were suitable mates for their daughters. All the women had to do was give consent to the marriage or reject their parents' choice, though this was rare. Fathers were usually eager to have their daughters married as long as a suitable mate

[1]Lue Hertens, "Family Life and Marriage Among Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa," Pro Mundi Vita, Africa Dossier 2 (June 1976): 20.

[2]John Roscoe, The Baganda (London: Macmillan, 1911), 87.

was found for them who could make the marriage payments.[1]

However, in the 1950s as Kaggwa[2] reported, it was

acceptable for a young woman to find her own marriage

partner and present him to her parents, through her

paternal aunt's assistance, for their approval. If her

parents liked her choice of a marriage partner, they would

ask her to invite him for a visit, and then arrangements

for betrothal would be made after that.

<div align="center">

Did Love Play a Part in
Selection of a Mate?

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It is a common view held by Western writers that

Ganda marriages were not based on love. But Apollo

Kaggwa's account[3] of Ganda marriage customs is strong

evidence against that view. Kaggwa affirms that a love

relationship between a man and a young lady would develop

before they thought of marriage. It was after their love

relationship grew that the man would announce to the young

lady's paternal aunt his intention to marry her niece.

Kyewalyanga[4] also contends that choosing a marriage

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[1]Francis-Xavier Kyewalyanga, <u>Traditional Religion, Custom and Christianity in East Africa</u> (Hohenschaftlarn: Klaus Renner Verlag, 1976), 50.

[2]Apollo Kaggwa, <u>Ekitaba ky'Empisa za Baganda</u> (The Customs of the Baganda) (London: Macmillan, 1952), 172.

[3]Ibid. "Ate omusajja bweyaberanga ayagala okuwasa omuwala basokanga kwagalana boka, omusajja nomuwala. Awo omukwano bwegwamalanga okunywera, omusajja nalyoka atumira ssenga womuwala nti 'jagala okuwasa omwanawo ono.'"

[4]Kyewalyanga, 49.

partner was often based on love:

> Love often formed a powerful motivation for marriage
> and swept aside all other considerations, as was shown
> by some young girls who voluntarily eloped from their
> parental homes with men whose proposal had been
> rejected by the girl's father.

Premarital Investigations

In traditional Ganda culture, after the suitor made his intentions known there was a period of carrying on investigations about the partners who desired to marry. Investigations about the suitor were done by the paternal aunt of the bride-to-be; the suitor's paternal aunt made investigations about the bride-to-be. These investigations concentrated on the partners' behavior[1] and health. Inquiries could also extend to the wealth of the suitor's father and the good name of his family.[2]

Today it is common practice for young people who wish to marry to make the investigations personally or through friends. Young people inquire mostly about sexual continence of the partner, wealth of the family, and health of the partner.[3]

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[1]Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda (1977 edition), 7, 28. "Era kitulaga empisa nga bwe zekkanyizabwanga ennyo mu byobufumbo>' See also Kaggwa, 172. "Naye kitaawe w'omuwala bwatamusimanga nga ayinza okumugaana nti: omusajja wamwe oyo gwemuleese nze simwagala wa mpisa mbi, awo nga amugoba."

[2]Kyewalyanga, 146.

[3]Ibid.

Criteria for a Desired Partner

In deciding the suitability of a marriage partner, parents used the following criteria:

1. <u>Tribal endogamy</u>. Marriage between tribal groups takes place more frequently at upper levels of society in towns--because these are people who do not care much about breaking from tradition, or in the latter case, there are fewer women of the same level in their tribal group. Traditionally, the majority of marriages, however, take place inside the tribal group because there was usually rivalry between tribes. The main objection to intertribal marriage was related to differences in custom.[1]

2. <u>Clan exogamy</u>. One's partner is chosen only outside his or her father's clan.[2]

3. <u>Physical and moral qualities</u>. Suitable partners should come from families enjoying good health. Young men expect their future wives to be obedient and full of respect. Girls expect their husband to be a gentle companion, one with whom she can share her joys and difficulties. Men do not want to marry lazy girls. Cleanliness and good behavior are required of a wife. Young men must be strong, resourceful, and courageous.[3]

4. <u>Education</u>. In addition to traditional

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[1]Kaggwa, <u>Empisa za Baganda</u>, 157-160.

[2]Hertens, 21.

[3]Ibid.

criteria, educated young men today want to marry a wife of the same educational attainment. Some men, though, prefer to marry a wife who is not at all educated, or has very little education, to be the mother of their children and have a liaison with a girl of their intellectual level. They reason that educated girls do not make good mothers; and they reason that uneducated women may not be easily taken out by other men.[1]

5. <u>Religion</u>. The religious criterion is adhered to also. Marriages between members of different religious denominations are not encouraged. However, young women are often more ready to go with men of other religions and change their religion to that of the man.[2]

The qualities the Baganda looked for in a wife in the 1920s is interestingly peculiar, according to Roscoe. These included diligence in her work, obedience to her parents, ability at cultivation, and ability to cook. Physical features and age did not weigh much with the peasant, but a man needed to be assured that the woman was free from disease, especially leprosy. The king and chiefs were more particular about the appearance of their wives; the king showed preference for women with a light skin and a face like that of the Bahima of western Uganda.

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[1]Hertens, 22.

[2]Kyewalyanga, 142.

Kyewalyanga, who writes of Ganda marriage customs in the 1980s, observed that the determining factors for a suitable mate include sexual continence, beauty, and behavior for girls, and wealth of family and character for young men. He adds that today Christianity and Islam urge that whoever wants to marry should find a fellow Christian or Muslim respectively, although exceptions to this rule do occur.

Impediments to Marriage

Roscoe[1] observed that the rules governing choice of partner in Ganda traditional marriage were clearly defined, so that those who desired to marry were not left to guess who a suitable partner could be. "The law of consanguinity was clearly defined, and people could not easily make a mistake as to those with whom they might enter into a marriage contract."[2]

According to Kyewalyanga[3] choosing a marriage partner was governed by a complex set of rules limiting the categories of people who were eligible as mates. He identifies three central rules: The law of exogamy, incest prohibition, and diseases as a hindrance for marriage.

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[1]Roscoe, 82.

[2]Ibid., 82.

[3]Kyewalyanga, 51-56.

Law of Exogamy

This law still exists among the Ganda. Under this law it is an offense for a man to marry a woman from his father's clan or mother's clan. The reasons are that all children of his paternal uncle he regards as brothers and sisters; and all members of his father's clan a generation above him he regards as parents; members of his father's clan who are of his generation he regards as brothers and sisters; and those of a younger generation as his children. Therefore, they are all of the forbidden degree of consanguinity.[1]

It is not permitted to look for a marriage partner in one's mother's clan, because everyone in her clan is either an uncle or "mother" (koja oba nnyoko omuto).[2]

There were exceptions to this rule. Members of the royal family were exempt from ordinary marriage rules. The king always married his half-sister. Only when a king and queen have different mothers can they be said to be of different clans.[3]

In other words, blood relationship in Buganda is patrilineal--the father's clan becomes the clan of his children, with the exception of the royal family, in whose case it is matrilineal.

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[1]John Roscoe, Twenty-five Years in East Africa (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 79.

[2]Kyewalyanga, 51, 52.

[3]Roscoe, Twenty-five Years in East Africa, 81.

Another exception to the clan exogamy rule pertained to the lungfish-clan. It was so large that members were allowed to intermarry. This clan had two distinct branches which may have descended from different ancestors and have different second totems.[1]

There were also mutual marriage prohibitions[2] between clans that had entered into ceremonial blood-brotherhood (omukago).[3]

Rationale for Clan Exogamy

Roscoe[4] believes that inter-clan marriage relations kept the clans friendly. This enabled them to live peacefully with each other and seek each other's welfare.

On the other hand, Kaggwa[5] affirms that a more important reason was the desire to keep clan lines pure, or to keep a clear demarcation of clan lines, so that one could proudly trace the line of his/her kinship relations without interruptions.

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[1]Roscoe, The Baganda, 82, 128. See also Kyewalyanga, 52, 53.

[2]Ibid., 52.

[3]Ceremonial blood-brotherhood (okutta omukago) is an oath that was made between close friends. It was binding for life, and the relationship that ensued from it was more respected than brotherly relationship. Individuals who made this oath became blood-brothers to each other. Their oath was respected by their clanmates-- hence the application of the law of exogamy between their clans.

[4]Roscoe, Twenty-five Years in East Africa, 163.

[5]Kaggwa, 179.

The rule of exogamy was also for counteracting situations which would endanger social order. For example, marriage between a maternal uncle and his niece would introduce tension in the relationship. By such marriage the man's sister would become his mother-in-law, and the natural freedom and familiarity between a brother and sister would clash with the traditional in-law avoidance incumbent on him as a son-in-law! So the marriage impediment governing this case aims at safeguarding cohesion within the group of relatives, and prevents frustrations.[1]

Incest Prohibition

Marriage is forbidden between individuals who would be guilty of incest if they had sexual relations. The Baganda extend their understanding of incest (_ekivve_) not only to those who belong to the same family (daughter, son, brother, sister, uncle, aunt) but to include all members of the father's and mother's clan, and in-laws.[2]

In-laws were excluded as marriage partners. Among the Baganda there were ritual avoidances (_buko_) between son-in-law and mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law. These devices were to prevent violations of sexual taboos, and to prevent

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[1] Hertens, 24.

[2] Kyewalyanga, 53.

conflicts among close relatives.[1]

Sanctions for breach of incest laws were certain. A couple living in an incestuous union would be socially ostracized and driven away from the community; they could even be sentenced to death. Also, a person who broke this rule would be cursed by his or her parents and avoided by his father's and mother's clan.[2]

There was a common belief among the Ganda that violation of any important norm of social behavior such as regarding marriage prohibitions would be followed by mental or physical abnormality of the parties involved or their offspring.[3]

Diseases as a Hindrance for Marriage

Certain diseases could exclude a person from marriage, especially if they were contagious. For example, persons who were mentally ill (akazoole) and those having epilepsy (ensimbu), leprosy (ebigenge), tuberculosis (akafuba), and small-pox (kawaali) were generally unmarried.[4]

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[1]Ibid., 55.

[2]Ibid., 53.

[3]Ibid., 54.

[4]Ibid., 55,56; see also Kaggwa, 225-226, and Roscoe, The Baganda, 99-101.

Exceptions to the Rules Governing
Choice of Partner

Although traditional bars to marriage prevented one
to marry from one's mother's clan, young men were allowed
to marry from their grandmother's clan. A wife from that
clan would be called <u>Nasaza</u>; she would be responsible for
shaving her husband's beard and clipping his nails.[1]

The traditional Ganda system banned marriage with
in-laws. However, if a man died leaving his brother as
heir, the brother would take his sister-in-law for a wife.
In fact, according to Ganda custom, the sister-in-law
refers to her brother-in-law as "<u>baze</u>" or "<u>mwami</u>" (my
husband), and a brother-in-law refers to his sister-in-law
as "<u>mukazi wange</u>" (my wife).[2] -

Kalanda confirms that "the relationship   acquired
at marriage with the brother's wife . . . among the Ganda,
is not the relationship of affinity in the sense of canon
law, but a relationship similar to that acquired by the
marriage partners themselves, i.e., a quasi-marital
relationship."[3]

In summary, the rules governing choice of a
marriage partner were clearly defined. No one

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[1]Kaggwa, 178, 179.

[2]Kyewalyanga, 134.

[3]Paul Kalanda, "Adaptation," <u>African
Ecclesiastical Review</u> 5 (1963): 39-49.

contemplating marriage was left to guess who a suitable partner could be.

Courtship and Betrothal

Opportunities to Facilitate Courtship

Ganda society formerly provided no sufficient opportunities for young men and young girls to meet. First of all, activities of daily life and recreational pastimes were segregated along sex lines. There were girls' chores and boys' chores. Games were either for girls or boys.[1]

Kyewalyanga believes that secret meetings at the well, or in the woods, or in the banana plantations served dominantly the purpose of facilitating courtship.[2]

However, Mair[3] insists that girls had several chances of meeting young men at festival gatherings, termination of mourning ceremony (okwabya olumbe), ceremonies on the birth of twins (okwalula abalongo), and while on errands to fetch wood or water.

Roscoe adds, in his account The Baganda, that meetings between girls and young men were rare because these meetings were risky for the girls; they could become pregnant. It was a disgrace to the girl and her family if

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[1]Kyewalyanga, 57.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lucy Philip Mair, An African People in the Twentieth Century (London: Routledge, 1934), 78.

she became pregnant before marriage.[1]

This study admits that opportunities for girls and young men to meet to facilitate courtship were limited, due to the way Ganda social life was structured. And pre-marital pregnancy was a disgrace against which parents carefully guarded their young daughters.

A Short, Serious Courtship

Formerly, in Buganda, young men who were looking for a marriage partner were the only ones who engaged in courtship with girls, as opposed to courtship practices in the Western world.

When a young man met a girl he liked to marry he proposed friendship to her, either directly or through a mediator. When the girl consented to the friendship, there followed a short courtship whereby the young man sent messages and gifts to the girl to cement the relationship. Sometimes the young man even sent gifts to the parents of the girl--gifts of meat, salt, sugar, tea. Through those gifts the girl's parents got a hint that the young man was interested in marrying their daughter.[2]

This study would briefly point out that Ganda marriage proceeded from a love relationship between a man and a young lady as opposed to common understanding among Western writers. According to Kaggwa, marriage resulted

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[1]Roscoe, The Baganda, 79, 80.

[2]Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," 14, 15.

from an intimate friendship between a man and a girl which started in secrecy.[1]

It is also important to note that a man who seriously courted a girl refrained from having sexual relations with her, since virginity before marriage was a desired virtue. The young man who was courting abstained from sexual intercourse with the girl prior to marriage in order to show her that he seriously intended to marry her. The girl also exercised restraint and modesty toward the young man because she feared that the young man after sexual satisfaction might not marry her.[2]

Introduction Ceremonies

After the young man who was looking for a marriage partner won the girl's friendship and ascertained her willingness to marry him, and after his father had promised to help him pay the bride-price, a messenger was sent to put the proposal before the girl's parents. The messenger could be the paternal aunt (senga) of the girl or, in some clans, a paternal uncle of the girl (kitawe omuto) or a friend. In most cases, though, a man approached the girl's paternal aunt when he considered marrying the girl.

The girl's aunt investigated the young man's suitability to become husband to her niece. If she found

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[1]Kaggwa, 172. "Ate omusajja bwe yakeerauga ayagala okuwasa omuwala baasokanga kwagalana boka, omusajja nomuwala."

[2]Kyewalyanga, 57, 58.

the young man's character and family acceptable, she reported his intentions to the father of the girl. If the father of the girl found through investigation that the suitor would be a good husband to his daughter, he referred the matter to the brother of the girl who would make arrangements for the necessary traditional ceremonies.[1]

First Visit

Before the introduction ceremony the suitor accompanied by relatives and friends paid a visit to the parents of the girl he wished to marry. The girl informed her parents in advance that the young man who wished to marry her was coming for a first visit. The girl's aunt would be present on that day, and she would be the girl's spokesperson.[2]

Among the people who accompanied the suitor were his friends, one of whom acted as the spokesperson (the suitor was supposed to keep quiet throughout the visit except to respond to greetings), his sister, and his brothers.[3]

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[1]Kaggwa, 172. "Awo omukwano bwegwamalanga okunywera omusajja nalyoka atumira ssenga womuwala nti: Njagala okuwasa omwanawo ono. Awo ssenga womuwala nakebera omulenzi oyo, raye bweyamusiimanga, awo nabulirako mwanyina omulala nti: Omuwala gundi ayagala okufumbirwa omulenzi guudi. Awo abo bombi bwebamalanga okusiima omusajja oyo, ssenga womuwala nalyoka atwala omusajja oyo eri kitaawe womuwala namwanjula nti: Omusajja ono ayagala okuwasa omwana wange ono."

[2]Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda, 8, 36.

[3]Ibid., 36.

On the first visit, the suitor brought goodwill gifts to the girl's family. They included baskets of meat, salt, and clothing. The gifts were presented to the father of the girl by her aunt.[1]

Official Introduction Ceremony

This was the time when the suitor's intention to marry the girl was officially announced to her parents. The suitor was accompanied to the ceremony by his master of ceremony and spokesman, his sister, some of his brothers, and friends. The suitor's party brought two calabashes of beer and a number of customary gift items.[2]

Present to welcome the guests were the girl who was being proposed to, her father and mother, her paternal aunt--who was the girl's spokesperson, the girl's brother-- who spoke on the parents' behalf, and friends of the family.

The guests were seated--the suitor sat between the master of ceremony and his sister--and greeted first by the girl's aunt followed by the girl's father. The aunt returned soon after with the girl to greet the guests. After greetings, the aunt spoke addressing the brother of the girl: "ssebo njagala kukunobako" (my husband, I want to

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[1]Ibid., 38, 39.

[2]Ibid., 40.

leave you).[1] The brother inquired where his sister was
going. And the aunt answered[2] that one of the guests was
taking her. She got up and touched the suitor and said:
"He is the one" (_yono ssebo_). The brother usually
expressed surprise that he did not know that the guests had
come to rob him.[3]

The Marriage Contract

In order to move the ceremony to the next stage,
the brother asked the guests if they brought any beer to
entertain him while his sister's marriage was being
discussed (_ebyo mbitegedde, naye tunayogerera ku malusu_
merere?). When the brother posed the question, all the
suitor's party profusely thanked him, because it indicated
his willingness to give away his sister in marriage. The
master of ceremony brought the beer, opened and tasted it,
then handed it to the brother, who posed a question--this
time to his sister, "Should I drink the beer? (_omwenge_
nywe?). The aunt answered, "Drink! (_nywa ssebo_). This
answer by the aunt signified the girl's consent to marry

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[1]Ibid., 40. Unmarried girls usually referred to
their brother as "husband." When they got married it was
as if they were running away from the "husband."

[2]The paternal aunt of the girl spoke on the girl's
behalf.

[3]Ibid., 41.

the suitor.[1] And when she answered affirmatively, the suitor's party showed their profound appreciation because from that point on they were assured of having a bride. After the brother drank of the beer, he shared with the guests.[2]

According to Roscoe, the drinking of the suitor's beer signified a legally binding action in marriage. It was like signing a marriage contract. The husband could later on refer to this occasion if any question arose as to the marriage having been a lawful one.[3]

Marriage Settlement

Announcing the Bride-price

The brother of the bride-to-be also announced the bride-price that had been decided on. The bride-price proper consisted of 10,000 cowrie shells (mutwalo) before the introduction of paper money. Along with the mutwalo were mandatory presents which consisted of beer, a live goat for the after-wedding party, and a garment for the mother. The brother of the bride might receive a kanzu (an Arab-style garment), and the bride was to receive a garment too. The bride-price was to be paid before the marriage took place. Sometimes the suitor brought the money with

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[1]The girl's consent was needed before the introduction ceremony proceeded; getting married to the suitor had to be her decision.

[2]Ibid., 41.

[3]Roscoe, The Baganda, 88.

him, or a date was agreed upon when it was to be paid. The
wedding date was also decided at the introduction ceremony.
Four months was the maximum allowable interval from the
introduction to the wedding because the parents were under
pressure to keep the girl chaste.[1]

Significance of Marriage Payments

In many societies of the world when people marry,
some goods and services pass from one group of kin to the
other as a form of marriage settlement.[2] So marriage in
most African societies involves a series of payments,
gifts, or services, the most frequent of these being from
the husband and his kin to the wife's kin. Some writers
refer to these forms of marriage settlement as 'dowry,'
'marriage compensation,' 'bridewealth,' or 'bride-price,'
but in this study they are referred to as marriage
payments.

Ivy Papps[3] identified four kinds in an attempt to

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[1]Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," 15.

[2]Jack Goody and S. J. Tambiah, Bridewealth and
Dowry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 22.
The frequency of bride-price and dowry in different parts
of the world, is graphically stated by Goody and Tambiah
as follows: (1) bridewealth is most common of marriage
transaction in Africa, 82%; (2) the circum-mediterranean
region, 62%; (3) East Eurasia, 56%; (4) Insular Pacific,
53%; the major Eurasia countries are characterized by
dowry.

[3]Ivy Papps, "The Role and Determinants of Bride-
Price: The Case of a Palestinian Village," Current
Anthropology 24, no. 2 (April 1983): 203.

clarify the vocabulary of marriage payments in anthropological literature:

1. Bride-price/bride-wealth = payment from the groom or his family to the bride or her family.

2. Groom-price or groom-wealth = payment from the bride or her family to the groom or his family.

3. Dowry = payment from the bride's family to the newly married couple.

4. Dower = payment from the groom's family to the newly married couple.

Jack Goody[1] who viewed marriage payments as a transmission of property and services between two kin groups illustrated the different forms diagramatically (see fig. 1):

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            Groom        Bride
              Δ      =     0
    i.   ---------------->  Bride-wealth/Bride-price
   ii.   ---------------->  Bride-Service
  iii.   <---------------   Dowry
   iv.   <--------------->  Gift-exchange/sister-exchange
    v.   X             X    Absence/token
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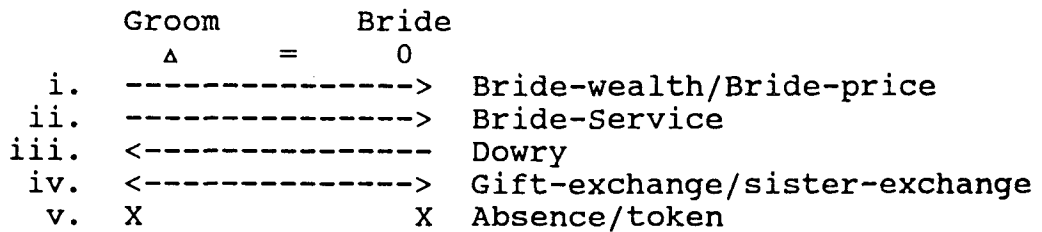
Fig. 1. Diagram representing marriage transactions. Arrows indicate flow of goods and services.

From Jack Goody and S. Tambiah, <u>Bride Wealth and Dowry</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge Univerity Press, 1973), 1.

The marriage transaction that this study is concerned with is often referred to either as 'dowry' or

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[1]Goody and Tambiah, 1.

'bride-price.' But these two terms are not interchangeable though used synonymously. According to Goody's diagram above, in bridewealth or bride-price, goods and services pass from the groom and his family to the bride and her family, whereas in dowry (the bride's pre-mortem inheritance of her family assets) goods pass from the bride's family to the groom's.

Forms of Marriage Payments

Marriage payments take different forms depending on the society. They may be in the form of livestock for pastoral societies; or agricultural products and farm implements in agricultural societies; in other societies marriage payments are made in the form of cash.[1]

Quantum of Marriage Payments[2]

The amount of marriage payments may be fixed in various ways: by custom, by bargaining and agreement, by legislation, or it may be left to the discretion of the groom. However, the approximate amount is determined by custom.

Various factors are considered in determining the size of marriage payments:

1. Physical attractiveness (In many African

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[1]D. D. Nsereko, "The Nature and Functions of Marriage Gifts in Customary African Marriages," <u>American Journal of Comparative Law</u> 23, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 683.

[2]Ibid., 686-8.

societies the beauty of the bride-to-be was irrelevant in determining the amount of marriage payments. A Ganda saying illustrates this fact: "It is not beauty but good manners that count in marriage.")

2. Experience in housework of the bride-to-be

3. The behavior of the bride-to-be

4. Additional payments by the prospective groom if the bride-to-be was already pregnant by him; the extra being a fine for disgracing her family by making her pregnant before marriage

5. The social, economic, and educational standing of the family of the groom (If the groom was from a chief's family or a member of the royal family, it would be a great honor for the family of the bride-to-be, so they would usually not ask for anything or just nominal gifts. But the family would get royal favors).

6. More payments for a first marriage than for a second

7. The marriage payments were linked to the quantum of rights transferred.[1] In matrilineal-descent groups where the rights in a woman's procreative powers belong to her natal lineage, the amounts of marriage payments were comparatively less than in other societies. In patrilineal descent societies, marriage payments were higher because the children are affiliated to the father's kin. There is

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[1]Goody and Tambiah, 3, 4.

virilocality (the bride moves to the groom's homestead);
marriage was more undissolvable due to the fact that in the
event of a divorce the wife's kin might have to return the
marriage payments if she was to blame for the separation.

The custom of marriage payments, however, suffered
abuse in Uganda after the introduction of a cash economy.
Some parents demanded too much for their daughters, and
missionaries were opposed to the custom and taught their
adherents to disregard the custom. So the colonial
government stepped in and introduced legislation to
regulate the amounts. In 1903 Buganda Parliament or the
Lukiiko passed the Marriage Customs and Procedure Law which
set limits to 10 rupees for peasants and 40 rupees and a
cow for upper classes. Other local administrations in
Uganda went ahead to pass similar legislation, aimed at
curbing excesses in marriage payments.[1]

Functions of Marriage Payments

Mair submitted[2] that marriage payments, by making
good the loss to the woman's kin of a working member,
preserved the equilibrium between the woman's kin and the
man's people. In addition, marriage payments maintained
the stability of the marriage and the keeping of the
marriage contract since the kinfolk of the guilty party

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[1]Nsereko, 688-9.

[2]Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," 18.

through whose fault the marriage is dissolved would suffer
economic loss. Furthermore the distribution of the
marriage payments among the wife's relatives created in
them an interest in her position as a wife; and the persons
among whom marriage payments were distributed were those to
whom the wife had a right to appeal for protection against
her husband; the husband would appeal to them when his wife
took off without a good reason.

Radcliffe-Brown supplied fresh insights to the
marriage payments debate by counteracting the Western
objection that marriage payments constituted wife purchase
and recognizing the symbolic nature of the African marriage
transactions. He affirmed that, in African marriages, the
making of payments of goods and services by the bridegroom
to the bride's kin was an essential part of establishing
legal marriage; he described marriage payments as "the
objective instrument by which a 'legal' marriage is
established."[1] He opposed the Western position:

> The idea that an African buys a wife in the way an
> English farmer buys cattle is the result of ignorance,
> which may once have been excusable but is so no longer,
> or of blind prejudice.[2]

Radcliffe-Brown noted that it is necessary to
recognize that whatever economic importance marriage
payments may have, it is their symbolic aspect that is

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[1]A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, eds.,
African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (London: Oxford
University Press, 1964), 53.

[2]Ibid., 46-7.

significant. In order to shed light on the issue he made
an analogy between African marriage payments and the
English custom of giving the engagement ring or the wedding
ring. He had this to say:

> Though an engagement ring may have considerable value
> (more value than many Africans 'pay' for their wives),
> the giving of it is not regarded as an economic or at
> least not as a business transaction. It is symbolic.[1]

While agreeing with Mair's idea that marriage
payments are compensation or indemnity for the woman's
family for the loss of a member, Radcliffe-Brown recognized
that in some instances marriage payments are used to
establish a friendly alliance between two kin groups.
Especially where the same cattle/goods are used in
successive marriages, the payments establish special
relations between families that are formed as a result of
the marriage.[2]

Marriage payments could also be viewed as a
transfer of rights over the woman from her father to her
husband. Radcliffe-Brown illustrated this fact by examples
from early European marriages. In early English times
marriage payments were interpreted as payment for the
transfer of the woman's mund from the father to the
husband. And the legal term for a legitimately married
woman was mundi kjöbt, meaning one whose mund had been
purchased. In Sweden the transfer of the mund was not by

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[1]Ibid., 48.

[2]Ibid., 53-54.

purchase but by gift, so the expression for marriage was
giftarmal. In Roman law 'marriage by purchase' did not
mean sale of a woman, but the legal transfer of manns to
her husband (mund and manns are similar in meaning).

So in early European societies what was important
to legalize the union of a man and a woman and to call it
marriage was that legal power over his daughter was
surrendered by the father and acquired by the husband.
This transfer of legal power was based on giving a gift or
making a payment by the man.

In Africa, an unmarried woman lived under the
control of and protection of her father and her kin. If
injured or killed, her kin claimed indemnity. At marriage,
she passed under the control and protection of her husband
and his kin. If she was injured or killed it was the
husband who claimed indemnity. It is this transfer of mund
(or right to control and protect) which is the central
significance of the marriage transaction.[1]

Kressel (1973) also saw marriage payments as
validating or legalizing marriage within the wider social
framework. He went further to say that marriage payments
provide social approval of the marriage covenant, as
distinct from other interpersonal covenants and bonds.
Kressel added that marriage payments are a surety for the
future stability of the marriage:

[1]Ibid., 48-49.

The future stability of the new marriage bond is a
matter of concern to the wider society, and the bride-
price testifies, by its size, to the effort invested in
preventing a divorce.[1]

However, Kressel questioned the explanation of
marriage payments as compensation to the father's household
for the loss of her work. His reasons are that the sons'
brides who move into the father's clan take the place of
the daughters who married out; and the marriage payments
from the daughters' marriage are used to pay the sons'
wives' marriage payments.[2]

According to Goody and Tambiah, marriage payments
involve the transmission of property at marriage. While
this transfer may have its symbolic aspects, they believed
that it is primarily economic: providing for movement of
property to be exploited for productive and other social
purposes.[3]

Goody and Tambiah helped to clarify the matter of
marriage payments and consequent rights. They affirmed
that to marry with bridewealth involves the transfer of
rights to the husband: genetricial rights or rights in the
fertility of the woman, implying that children who result
from this union belong to the husband and his kin (they can
inherit their father's property); uxorial rights or rights

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[1]Gideon M. Kressel, "Bride-Price Reconsidered,"
Current Anthropology 18, no. 3 (September 1977): 442.

[2]Ibid., 441-2.

[3]Goody and Tambiah, 1.

to a woman's household duties, and exclusive sexual rights.
Without marriage payments the husband in such a marriage
will have no genetricial rights and only limited uxorial
ones. The children may be taken to live with their
mother's people, and they have no right to inherit their
father's property. The husband in such a marriage may
bring a case against an adulterer, but he is not entitled
to compensation. So marriage without marriage payments
means less conjugal rights (by the husband) and more
consanguinal (by wife's kin) control over the bride and is
hence associated with less enduring marriages (higher
divorce rates).[1]

The authors further observe that the transfer of
property in marriage payments gives rise to a long-term
relationship characterized by reciprocity between the
groom's and the bride's kin or between those who provide
and those who receive the payments.[2]

D. D. Nsereko, a Ugandan with a legal background,
explores the functions of marriage payments in African
customary marriages, and presents new and interesting
views. He observes that acceptance of marriage payments
serves as conclusive evidence that the bride's family
has consented to the marriage. He also compares the act of
receiving marriage gifts with the registration of customary

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[1]Ibid., 16, 17.

[2]Ibid., 2, 3.

marriage since it is an event participated in by many people from the bride's and groom's family so that it is undeniable. And the way he presented the symbolic nature of marriage gifts is interesting: "Just as a Christian says to his bride, 'With this ring I thee wed' so also the African says, 'with these marriage gifts I thee wed' to his bride. Both the ring and the gifts are a symbol."[1]

Nsereko pointed out that marriage payments serve as an expression of the husband's gratitude to the bride's family for bringing her up and allowing her to get married to the groom; a fact which Western critics of marriage payments often miss. He argued for the custom of marriage payments imparting stability to the marriage:

> In rural areas of Uganda one may occasionally hear a quarrelsome housewife, for whom no marriage gifts were delivered . . . telling the husband that after all he did not 'pay' anything for her. "Wangula meka"--she would say implying that she can easily leave her husband with no legal impediments because no gifts were made.[2]

Where marriage payments were made, a wife would be less prone to express defiance because she knows that if she left him, her parents would have to return the payments if the marriage failed because of her fault.

Also the fact that the husband gives something in order to marry his wife enhances his affection and devotion to her since the payments are a sign that he values her.

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[1]Nsereko, 696.

[2]Ibid.

Finally, Nsereko stated that the giving of marriage gifts entitles a man to the legal custody of children of the marriage. In other words, marriage payments serve to legitimize the children of the marriage. The payments also effect the transfer of the productive powers of a woman from her family to that of her husband. Otherwise all children born of a woman for whom no payments were made belong to her family. To the African mind the reproductive capacity of the bride is very important (since bearing offspring is one of the primary purposes of marriage) and requires some recompense even if it is nominal.[1]

Ivy Papps interestingly gave marriage payments a ceremonial or status-defining function. As the wedding ring in Western marriages, the receiving of marriage payments is a sign that the marriage has taken place.[2]

Pro Mundi Vita, an African-based journal, presented the function of marriage payments in a novel way: they were termed "juridical instruments" establishing the fact of the transfer of right: the right to live in regular union as husband and wife; the right, under a patrilineal system, of the husband to beget with this woman children for his own lineage, and the right to see recognized as legally his own all the children born of his wife; the right of the husband over exclusive sexual services and domestic services of the

[1]Ibid., 693-99.

[2]Papps, 204.

wife; and the right to compensation for loss in case of the wife's adultery.

Furthermore, the notion of Westerners that marriage payments constitute a contract by which a wife is purchased is corrected. First, the clan membership of the wife is not transferred to that of her husband. She always remains a member of her father's clan. Second, marriage payments do not compensate her family for economic loss experienced because of her departure. It is rather compensation for breach in family solidarity. Third, marriage compensation promotes the 'circulation' of women on a far wider scale. The compensation obtained is used to secure a wife for one of the young men in the family. And fourth, marriage payments compensate the bride's parents for having brought her up well.[1]

In addition the consequences of cohabiting without making marriage payments is labelled shameful. Without the payments Africans believe there is no customary marriage but simply a natural union or concubinage. Those who want to regularize their marriage have to make marriage payments.[2]

Marriage Vows

After the marriage contract was validated by the girl's brother drinking the suitor's beer, the bridegroom

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[1]Hertens, 26.

[2]Ibid., 26-27.

was asked to provide witnesses who were to give a guarantee
of his responsibility and trustworthiness. These witnesses
had to promise that the bride would be well-looked-after
and not mistreated. The bride and bridegroom made an oath
(obweyamo): the bridegroom promised to treat his wife well,
not to desert her; the bride promised to be faithful to her
husband, to cultivate and cook for him, and look after his
interests.[1]

Collecting Marriage Payments

The prospective bridegroom spent about twelve
months getting the marriage payments together, although as
a rule he had secured some of the items before he went for
the introduction ceremony. But he would still have the
balance to find. He begged among his relatives and friends
to come up with the amounts required.[2]

How Marriage Payments Affected
Period of Betrothal

The length of the period of betrothal depended on
various circumstances. In some cases a year passed from

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[1]Kyewalyanga, 61; see also Kaggwa, 176, 177.
". . . bweyamusiimanga nga akiriza mangu okunywa omwenge
gwaleese nebalyoka bamuzaaza abazadde uga babiri, oba
basatu. Awo omusajja oyo naleeta abazadde mu maaso go
bakoddomi be--awo banyina omukazi nebagomba abazaddebe
nti: omwana wamwe ono bwakolanga akabi, nga okutta
omuntu, oba okubba, oba okugaana okukolera mukamawe,
natwaza mwanyina ffe, mwe mulibako omusango. . . . Awo
nabo abazadde abeyimiridde munabwe nebaddamu nti . . .
omusango gwonna . . . gulibeera kuffe."

[2]Roscoe, The Baganda, 88, 89.

the time of negotiating the bride-price until the wedding.

Among some clans, the period between betrothal and the

wedding was not more than a few months. However, the most

important factor on which the length of betrothal depended

was the ability of the bridegroom to secure the bride-price

and the things required for the wedding; especially meat,

bananas, beer, and presents to the girl's parents.[1]

During the period of betrothal the couple met openly.

The bridegroom-to-be and the bride-to-be with their friends

visited each other, not for sexual relations before

marriage, but to get to know each other.[2] The couple was

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[1]Kyewalyanga, 61, 62.

[2]Ibid., 57, 58. Virginity of girls was very
important among the Ganda. Pre-marital sexual
intercourse of unmarried girls was discouraged and
disapproved. A man who seduced a girl and made her
pregnant was fined heavily--for example, he brought a
goat or a cow and several garments to the parents of the
girl.
      If the unmarried girl became pregnant, this was
called amawemukirano. She was compelled to tell who her
lover was. Her parents were supposed to avoid her until
a ritual ceremony was performed. The ritual consisted of
goat's meat brought by the lover, eaten by the girl's
parents, the girl, and her lover. If this was not done,
it was believed that the girl's father would die. For
further reference on virginity of girls, cf., Kaggwa,
171, 179.
      "Ate abawala abeddako tebayinzanga kukabawala nga
tebanaba kufumbirwa. . . . Era omusajja nga asobeza ku
muwala onmto akyali enteeka, nga asalirwa omusango
okumusinga, namugatta embuzi, oba omugongo gw'ente
n'embugo bbiri, nabiwa kitawe womuwala. . . . Omwana
owobuwala namala afuna dubuto nga akyali ku kuggya lwa
kitawe, ago gegayitibwanga 'amawemukirano,' omusajja
eyamukola olubuto yatekebwangako omusango, yatanzibwauga
embuzi . . . efumbibwa negagirya . . . kitawe womuwala
abuuka mukaziwe, awo nga omuzizo guwedde." Ekibiina
Kyolulimi Oluganda, Kabba Ka Muwala, 9, 58. The authors
indicate that it was a sign of good upbringing and good

free to break off the engagement.[1]

Bringing the Marriage Payments

When the suitor had collected the amount required for marriage payments, he notified his in-laws-to-be of his coming. The party taking the marriage payments included the suitor or groom-to-be, his sister and brother, a spokesman, and a couple of friends. Present to receive the payments were the bride-to-be, her brother--who was chief spokesperson for the young lady's father, a number of other siblings, her aunt--who was a representative of the bride-to-be, and a number of relatives.

The groom's spokesman identified and introduced each item which his party brought. Then the brother of the bride-to-be acknowledged receipt of all the items and asked the suitor's party when they would take their wife. The bride's family did not want to keep the bride for too long after the marriage payments had been delivered because it was their responsibility to keep her chaste.[2]

After the groom's party thanked their in-laws for accepting their goods and for their further consent to the marriage, they announced a day when they would come for the

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character for a girl to be a virgin at her marriage; Roscoe, The Baganda, 79; Mair, "Native Marriage in Buganda," 10-11.

[1]Kyewalyanga, 62.

[2]Ekibiina Ky'olulini Oluganda, 42, 43.

bride.[1] For in traditional Ganda society, when marriage payments were delivered, the marriage was finally ratified. The couple was considered married from that point on. The ceremonies that followed were only a process of transferring the bride to her new home.

Pre-Wedding Rites

Preparing the Bride (<u>Okufumbirira Omugole</u>)

Kaggwa wrote[2] that ten days before the wedding, the bride-to-be was washed from head to foot by her sister or someone appointed to do it and groomed so she will look her best at the wedding.

Roscoe[3] added that for several weeks before her marriage a Ganda bride-to-be was fed and made as plump as possible, and her body was rubbed with oil to make it look soft.

Mair,[4] however, maintained that the bride, before transfer to her future husband, was put in seclusion for a couple of days and was bathed three times a day.

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[1]Ibid., 45-46.

[2]Kaggwa, 173. "Ate omuwala bweyabeeranga anatera okuwasibwa, baamunalizauga ennaku kkumi era bamuwoomye. Okwo 'kwekufumbirira' nti: muwala wa gundi bamufumbirira anatera okufumbirwa."

[3]Roscoe, <u>The Baganda</u>, 89.

[4]Mair, <u>African People</u>, 84.

Pre-marital Counseling

On the day when the bride was to go to her husband's house, her relatives, especially women relatives, sat with her and instructed her on how she should conduct herself in her husband's house. Often the instruction was given in an insulting way, belittling the bride and causing her to cry. So the ritual is referred to as "insulting the bride."[1] The relatives warned the bride against conduct which would bring dishonor to her family.

The bride was instructed[2] to respect her husband and her in-laws; she was taught to put her husband first in everything; she was warned against dishonesty; she was advised to generously share her food with visitors and relatives; she was reminded that she was going through a status change--becoming a wife and a mother.

Instruction by the bride's paternal aunt carried more weight because hers is a voice of experience; she spoke on behalf of the bride's family, and she was the bride's spokesperson throughout the marriage ceremonies. She even accompanied the bride to her new home. The bride's aunt carried the family's responsibility to prepare the bride for successful marriage. The bride's aunt warned her not to be a tale-bearer; she warned her that her in-laws might level a number of unfounded accusations against

[1]Ekibiina ky'olulimi Oluganda, 47.

[2]Ibid., 48, 49.

her, such as being a sorcerer, but she should remain steadfast and preserve her marriage. She emphasized it to the bride to be respectful to her mother- and father-in-law; she instructed the bride to be hospitable to all visitors especially her husband's relatives. She reminded the bride to be a patient wife, never to express anger publicly towards her husband. The bride was instructed to work hard and provide food for her husband and family.[1]

At the end of the session, the bride's expected reaction was to shed tears, showing sorrow for separating from her primary family, and to show humble consent to all that had been told to her. If she was indifferent, her relatives pinched her cheeks to make her cry. The crying would keep her in a somber attitude, for she was not supposed to be a jolly, jumpy bride, but shy, graceful, and self-conscious, referred to as okuloola.[2]

Parents Bid the Bride Farewell

Before parents said farewell to her the bride fetched a pot of water and grass for her mother. The mother thanked her and laid out the grass on the floor of her house, then put a mat on which she and the bride's father sat. The bride sat on her father's lap first, and he counseled her; then she sat on her mother's lap as the mother said farewell to her and counseled her.

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[1]Ibid., 49-50.

[2]Ibid., 48.

The father's counsel went like:

> My child you are of age, go get married. Be obedient
> to your husband as your mother is obedient to me. Do
> not leave your husband for trivial reasons.[1]

The bride's mother said to her daughter:

> My child go get married. Be obedient to your husband
> as a wife is supposed to obey her husband., If your
> husband annoys you, don't come to me first but go to
> your mother-in-law and tell her your complaint, this is
> not your home anymore, your husband's place where you
> are going is going to be your home.
>   My child never allow hot anger to control your
> behavior. If you fight with your husband run to your
> mother-in-law, if you are unable, go to the woods and
> collect firewood.[2]

The bride's mother's final rite was to rub oil on

her daughter's forehead, chest, and arms as she pronounced

a blessing: "My child go get married. May the blessings of

your ancestors go with you."[3] -After that, the bride shed

tears and walked out to leave her parents' home.

The Last Ceremonial Meal[4]

After the bride was dressed, she was served a last

ceremonial meal. The food for the occasion included

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[1]Ibid., 50. "Mwana wange okuze, genda ofumbirwe.
Owuliranga balo nga Nyoko bwampulira. Tonoberanga
ibitalimu."

[2]Ibid. "Mqwana wangfe genda ofumbirwe.
Owuliranga balo. Omukazi awulira awulira bba. Balo
bwakunyizanga tojjanga mangu gyendi wabula ogendanga wa
nnyazala wo n'omunyonyola ansonga. Eno tekyali wammwe,
gyogenda y'ewammwe. Mwana wange toberanga wa busungu bwa
ttumbilzi. Balo ng'akukkubye oddukiranga wa nnyazala wo,
bwotosobalanga oddauga mu kibira ng'otyaba nku."

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., 49.

mushroom soup (with no salt) and steamed bananas. The bride's father sent the bride a portion from his plate, as did the mother. This was a sign of affection from the bride's parents to the bride,[1] and it was also their way of saying farewell to her.

Donning Aunt's Costume
(Okusunika Ssenga)

The aunt of the bride was also ceremonially dressed in barkcloth (probably the one that the bridegroom brought with marriage payments). She also held a ceremonial knife, which identifies her as a cook;[2] she represented the bride; she was getting married. So her dress and implement suggested her role.[3]

Wedding (Transfer of the Bride)

Last Set of Ceremonial
Gifts (Kasuzekatya)

This was the last set of gifts the groom brought before the transfer of the bride. It was primarily intended for the parents of the bride. Formerly, it consisted[4] of five guards of beer, a basket of salt, two barkcloths, and a goat that had already been slaughtered

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[1]The bridesmaid is also given a portion by the parents because she is also treated as a bride. Normally the bridesmaid was a younger sister of the bride.

[2]It is said in Luganda when a man marries: "afunye omufumbi wettooke" meaning he has gotten himself a cook.

[3]Ekibuna Ky'olulinii Oluganda, 49.

[4]Kaggwa, 172, 173.

(put in baskets). Through later changes, a tin of paraffin, a box of matches, sugar, and meat were added. When <u>kasuzekatya</u> was delivered, the bride was dressed up and made ready to leave her parents' home.[1]

Customs Relating to the Day
of Transfer of the Bride

The day had to be dry; if it rained the transfer of the bride was called off. Similarly, if a hyena or a fox cried the night before the transfer, the ceremony was called off. The Baganda believed that rain or the howling of a hyena or fox prior to the day of transfer of the bride symbolized tears and death. These symbols[2] could therefore mean an early death for the bride and groom.

The Bridal Party

The bride was delivered to her husband in the evening; arrival was planned to be at nightfall. She was decked with ornaments, veiled in barkcloth, and was hoisted on the shoulders of a strong man; sometimes a relay of men carried her. The bridal party consisted of the bride's brother, her aunt, and a number of male and female relatives and friends. She was also accompanied by a young

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[1] Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda, 42, 48.

[2] Kaggwa, 173. "Enkuba bwe yatonyanga . . . ngomugole tatwalibwa kuwasibwa, kubanga balinamu amakulu mu bigambo ebyo; nga bagamba nti: okutwala omugole omwa bba nga enkuba ettonye, bbawe affa mangu oba omugole yenyini okufa, enkuba okutonya ge maziga. Eva empisi viekibe okukaaba kwabyo nga bakuyita kubi nnyo, era nga nago bagayita maziga."

girl--either her sister or a near relative--called
emperekeze (one who accompanies). The emperekeze was also
decorated with ornaments and carried on men's shoulders.
She stayed with the bride in her new home for some days.
The significance of the emperekeze was to show the groom
and his relatives that the bride was not an orphan or a
slave but had relatives who loved and cared for her. The
bridal party made a procession to an agreed place to meet
the groom's procession.[1]

Rites of Handing Over
the Bride

As the bridal party approached the agreed-on place,
her clan drum (omubala) was played louder. The groom's
party also played the groom's clan drum louder until the
two groups met. The groom came fully dressed in a clean
kanzu (long garment for men) and fez hat, holding a walking
stick. He was accompanied by drummers and a group of
marchers who were usually his friends. When the bridal
party and the groom's party met, there was profuse joy
expressed especially by the groom's sisters and brothers;
there was drumming and dancing by people of both sides.

When the bridal party got to the appointed place,
the bride was hidden among women relatives at the back of
the procession until the groom gave them some money
(omubisulo). Then specially prepared grass was strewn on

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[1]Kaggwa, 173.

the ground, on which a mat was laid. The bride knelt on the mat as her brother took her hand and put it into the hand of the bridegroom, saying: "Here is your wife." This was the official transfer of the bride and was followed by profuse drumming, dancing, and expressions of joy by the groom's party.[1]

Carrying the Bride to Her Husband's House

After the bride was handed over to her husband, she was carried upon the shoulders of one of the husband's friends. She was veiled so that nobody could look at her before her husband did.

The bride's aunt and bridesmaid (mperekeze) accompanied the bride to her new home, while the rest of

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[1]Ekibiina ky'olulimi Oluganda, 54. For further reference to transfer of the bride, cf., Kaggwa, 173-174. "Nga bwebatuuka mu kifo ekyo kye balaganye okusisinkananw, onwgole nebamukweka mu bakazi banne, nebasooka okusabayo ensimbi kyasa, nga ekyo baguyita 'mubisulo,' era bwebamalanga okuzibawa nebalyoka bakwekula omugole nebamuteeka mu bbanga, mwanyina namukwata ku mukono okumugaba, awo namuwa abo abamuddukidde mikwano gyoli awasa nti: mukazi wammwe wuuyo mumutwale. Awo abaddukidde omugole nebamutwala eri bbawe amuwasizza."

Mair, An African People, 84, 85. She added that a sham fight took place when the bride's relatives met the bridegroom's company. The handing over of the bride to the husband's company, according to Mair, was one of the important acts which validated marriage.

Michael Nsimbi, Muddu Awulira (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970), 25. He insisted that the bride's paternal aunt (ssenga) accompanied her to the bridegroom's place for she was the bride's instructor. "Ba ssenga b'abaana abawala olwokuba abagunjuzi baabwe kyebava babatwala nga bagenda okufumbirwa." See also Roscoe, The Baganda, 89, 90.

the bridal party returned home. The bridesmaid was also carried by one of the husband's friends; and was also veiled until she got to the groom's house.[1]

At the Bridegroom's House

The wedding celebration was held out in the yard where temporary shelters were erected for the occasion. But the bride did not attend the celebration. She was taken straight to the bedroom by the sister of the groom, where she would stay secluded from the public for a week or longer. Before the bride accepted to enter into her husband's house, she hesitated until the groom's sister gave her a cash gift. She would also refuse to respond to any greeting until she was given another cash gift.[2]

The bride had her supper in the bedroom, waited on by the sister of the groom, but did not touch the food until she was given another cash award. At bedtime when the groom came into the bedroom to greet her, she refused to answer until he gave her a cash gift. The groom's sister would remind him: "Have you given money to my bride before you greet her? Please give her money before you greet her."[3] When he gave her money, the sister of the groom left the bedroom.

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[1]Kaggwa, 174.

[2]Ekibiina ky'olulimi Oluganda, 55.

[3]Ibid., 57. "Omugole wange gwotukirako okulamusa wamuwaddle dda ensimbi? Mala okumuwa olyoke omulanwse."

Insistence on cash gifts to the bride before securing her compliance was a test of the husband's (and his relatives') affection for the bride.[1]

Proof of Bride's Virginity

After the first night, the groom called his sister to the bedroom to let her know the bride was a virgin (<u>embeerera</u>). The sister sent the news to the bride's aunt. It was honorable for one's daughter to be found to be a virgin when married. So the bride's aunt rejoiced audibly at the news that her niece was found to be a virgin. A characteristic response in the aunt's words would be:

> Oh, Nnankya, the child of Zoobota, my wonder, you have honored me! Even when I insulted you for not looking graceful, it was for nothing! Go pack your beddings and look after your companion. I am returning home tomorrow to report you.[2]

The groom would sprinkle the bedding with blood of a goat slaughtered in the bride's honor and carried to the bride's parents by the aunt. They were sent to the parents as evidence that their daughter was found by her husband to be a virgin (<u>embeerera</u>). It was also a sign of gratitude to the parents for having kept their daughter chaste. Along with the bedding, the groom would send a goat as a

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[1] Roscoe, <u>The Baganda</u>, 90.

[2] Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluiganda, 58. "Oo, nnankya omwana wa zoboota, ekkula lyange, ngompadde ekitiibwa! Munnauge ne bwe nnamuvumanga nti amaggula amaaso kazzi nga muvumira bwereere! Genda nno ozingeko ebintu byange ne nwnno omujjanjabe. Nze enkya nja kuddayo mbaloope ewaffe."

gift to the bride's parents.[1]

However, if the bride was not found to be a virgin, a hole was cut in the middle of the barkcloth which was sent to her aunt as a sign that her niece was sexually incontinent (<u>yali mukaba</u>) before marriage.[2]

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A Feast in Honor of
the Bride

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A goat was slaughtered in honor of the bride. It was brought before the bride first who touched it. When the goat's meat was served, its liver (<u>ekibumba</u>) was served to the bride. She cut off a piece and served it to her husband, and if he ate it, this signified that he had accepted her as his wife. For the bride, this ritual signified that she was fully a married woman.[3]

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[1]Ibid. Concerning virginity of the bride see Michael A. Nsimbi, "Village Life," <u>Uganda Journal</u> 20 (1956): 35. He maintained that the highest honor a girl would bring to herself and her parents was to be found a virgin by her husband. She would be praised by her husband, her father-in-law, and mother-in-law. The father-in-law would present her parents with a goat to thank them on his son's behalf for guarding their daughter. He would present another goat to his daughter-in-law. See also Roscoe, <u>The Baganda</u>, 91; Mair, <u>An African People</u>, 10.
    Kaggwa, 174. "Bweyamusanganga nga akyali muto enteeka oba wamberera nga balaba olubugo oluggya ne balumausirako omusaayi gw'embuzi . . . ne baluwereza eri ssengawe. Okwo kwe kutegeeza nti: bamukuma buluugi omwana wabwe obutayononeka. Naye bweyabeerango omukulu nga bamwonona dda, olubugo balusalangamu ekituli wakati waalwo, nebalyoka baluwerezayo. Ekyo kye kyategezanga nti: omwana wamwe yali mukaba."

[2]Kyewalyanga, 65-66.

[3]Ibid., 65.

Post-Wedding Rites

Period of Seclusion

The bride remained in seclusion (<u>omugole okubeera</u>

<u>mu kisenge</u>) for a week or longer if the husband was a

wealthy man. She was taken care of by her husband's sister

and sometimes her aunt who bathed her and served her meals

in the bedroom. She did nothing in the husband's home all

this time.[1]

The Bridesmaid Returns Home

The bridesmaid returned to her relatives about four

days after the wedding. She took with her all ornaments

that her sister wore or borrowed for the wedding.[2] She was

also presented with either a barkcloth, a goat, or money.

Roscoe[3] added that when she was leaving she was dressed as

a bride, so that her relatives said "the bride has come

back."

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[1]Ibid. With reference to bridal seclusion, cf.,
Mair, <u>An African People</u>, 86. Mair compared this type of
seclusion to the European honeymoon, and she maintained
that this seclusion was the time for looking nice. The
bride was not allowed to see anybody except her husband
and sister-in-law who was taking care of her. Roscoe,
<u>The Baganda</u>, 91. Roscoe maintained that the bride did
not cook a meal immediately, but she bathed and did
nothing for about ten days; and the husband's friends
came to see and congratulate her.

[2]Kaggwa, 174.

[3]Roscoe, <u>The Baganda</u>, 91.

End of Period of Seclusion
(<u>Okugya Omugole Mu Kisenge</u>)

A week after the wedding, the groom's mother and his sister came to the groom's house for the purpose of seeing the bride out of seclusion. They came with food and gifts to the bride, which included two baskets, a knife, and a new barkcloth. The sister of the groom walked the bride out of the bedroom into the living room where the mother of the groom was waiting. Then the mother of the groom gave presents to the bride; she also put money in the baskets--symbolic of love and acceptance. The articles presented to the bride were an introduction to her new role as housewife.

The First Meal Prepared
by the Bride

On the day the bride came out of seclusion she cooked a ritual meal (<u>okufumbya omugole</u>) for her husband and his friends who had accompanied him to the wedding negotiations. The meal was called "<u>emere eyokusanyuka</u>"[1] meaning "a meal of rejoicing."

The food eaten at this feast was prepared by the bride assisted by her aunt, her sisters, and sisters of the groom. There is evidence to indicate that the food for the feast came from the bride's parents.[2] But the authors who

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[1]Kaggwa, 174. "Ate omugole bweyaviranga ddala mu kisenge, yafumbiranga bbawe emmere eyokusanyuka, nagirya awamu ne banne beyali nabo nga agenda okuwasa."

[2]Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda, 69.

claim this fact put the feast at the end of post-wedding rituals. The foodstuff included, but was not limited to, goats, chicken, bananas, mushrooms, and sesame.[1]

After the bride served this feast, she was no longer treated as a bride. She received from her husband working tools such as a knife, a hoe, working barkclothes, and her own banana garden.[2]

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A Wife's First Visit to
Her Mother-in-law

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One of the bride's first duties after coming out of seclusion was to cultivate in her mother-in-law's banana garden. She did not stop working until her husband's sister (mulamu) was sent by the mother-in-law to fetch her with a gift of some money. This custom was called "okuzirula omugole." If the mother-in-law delayed to send for her, it was an indication that her in-laws disliked her. This was sufficient reason for the bride to return to her parents and ask for a divorce. But if the mother-in-law liked her, she sent for her after just a short while

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Kaggwa, 175. "Baganda b'omukazi nabomusajja, era n'omukazi yenyini ne bafumba emmere eyo, nga bwemala okugya ne bagisoosootola we bagirya nga embaga ddala, nga basanyuka. Awo omukazi bweyamalanga okufumbira bbawe enkoko nga obugole buweddeko, nga bbawe amuwa buli kintu ekyokukozesa emirimu egyobufumbo: enkumbi n'obwambe, n'embugo ezirimirwamu nolusuku olulwe."

and gave her money and presents.[1]

The Bride's First Visit
to Her Parents

After about three months of marriage, the parents of the bride sent a message to the groom's house asking him to send his wife home or "to return the butter." The bride was supposed to return the barkcloth that she wore on her wedding and the remainder of the butter or oil which was used to dress her during her wedding--hence the title of the custom, which literally means returning the butter. She handed the butter to her father or his heir only. If her father or his heir was absent, she did not carry the butter back.

On her return to her husband her parents would give her gifts to take back, bananas and a couple of chickens, or even a goat and a cow if her father was a chief.

When she arrived at her husband's she would present a cock (sseggwanga) to her husband as a sign of declaring her new role as his married wife, and that she had become a member of his kin.[2]

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[1]Roscoe, The Baganda, 92. Concerning the bride's first visit to her in-laws, see Kaggwa, 174. "Ate omugole bweyagendanga okulima oluberyeberye ewa sezaalawe . . . nga bwamala okulima takomawo ka, awo banyina b'omusajja . . . bagenda nensimbi . . . ku lubimbi gy'alimye nebazimuwa, awo . . . nanyuka . . . ate bwebatamugyangayo mangu, nga ako ke kabonero nti omukazi oyo talyagalibwa bbawe."

[2]Kaggwa, 175. See also, Roscoe, The Baganda, 91; Kyewalyanga, 67, 68; Ekibiina, 64.

Summary: When Was One Considered
Married?

Ganda marriage does not take place at one single moment in time; it comes into being through a series of meetings, negotiations, and ceremonies. A valid marriage consists of:

1. The consent of the partners and their parents or guardians

2. The handing over of gifts from the bridegroom to the bride's parents (Hastings[1] pointed out that "transfer of bridewealth is the clearest single indication of the legitimization of a marital union.")

3. The blessings and ceremonies surrounding the handing over of the bide to the bridegroom culminating in their official cohabitation.

When the consent had been given, gifts exchanged, blessings pronounced, and bride and groom officially bedded in a house together, their marriage was traditionally in being, though the union would be strained and might be dissolved if a child was not conceived soon.

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[1]Adrian Hastings, _Christian Marriage in Africa_ (London: SPCK, 1973), 131.

CHAPTER IV

CHANGES AFFECTING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

LIFE IN AFRICA

Introduction

A new image of Africa is emerging. People are
living in ways that are not traditional anymore; they have
taken up several innovations. While many in the rural areas
are living closer to their old traditions, those living in
urban centers are living in new situations.

As a result of the new developments African culture
has undergone an evolution. This evolutionary change is
influenced by external forces resulting from developments in
the world in the areas of politics, economics, education,
religion, and other social changes. All these have altered
the African worldview.

Consequences of Urbanization and
Industrialization

Family Fragmentation

As Africa became industrialized, factories were
built in urban centers for ease of management and
transportation. Semi-urban areas developed around towns as
workers migrated from rural areas. The result was people
crowding to the industrial and urban areas in search of

employment, and a new social system developed. This exodus
of workers from rural areas to industries brought about
fragmentation of coherent families.[1]

Chinua Achebe in his novel No Longer At Ease
depicted the results of the rural exodus on the family of
Okonkwo. Obi, one of Okonkwo's sons, comes from the city of
Lagos to visit his parents in the village. Of the eight
siblings only one, Eunice, is left at home with their old
parents:

> Eunice came in wrapped in her loin-cloth. She was the
> last of the children and the only one at home. That was
> what the world had come to. Children left their old
> parents at home and scattered in all directions in
> search of money. It was hard on an old woman with eight
> children. It was like having a river and yet washing
> one's hands with spittle.[2]

In the pre-industrial African society the children
would not remain with their parents all their lives. They
would get married and leave their parents' house. But even
after they married, they still related closely to their
parents through mutual visits (male children usually built
their homes in the vicinity of their parents' village). The
situation is different where family members migrate to urban
centers and family relationships are fragmented, where a
person cannot easily leave work and go visit parents.

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[1]Festus Ambe Asana, "Problems of Marriage and
Family Life in an African Context, Viewed from the
Perspective of the Christian Pastor as Counselor" (Th.D.
dissertation, Boston University School of Theology,
1990), 86.

[2]Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease (London:
Heinemann Educational Books, 1960), 122.

Impersonal Relationships

Kayongo-Male and Onyango[1] pointed out how the urban environment impacts the African family through population density and heterogeneity. A high density of population implies in social terms that individuals meet greater numbers of people than in rural areas. More contacts result in relationships becoming impersonal because individuals cannot develop intimate social relationships with too many people.

Breach of Tradition

A high density of population also allows people who wish to deviate from the norms of acceptable family living to do so quite easily because they are hidden in an anonymous environment.   -

Encouraging Informal Unions

Heterogeneity of population refers to mixtures between different ethnic groups--groups which have different marriage customs and cultural practices come into contact in towns.

A comparison of sex ratios in urban areas in Uganda in 1969 showed that there were 146 men for every 100 women in Ugandan towns. When there is an imbalance in the sex ratio a number of social problems occur, such as prostitution, temporary unions, and high illegitimacy rates,

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[1]Diane Kayongo-Male and Philista Onyango, The Sociology of the African Family (London: Longman Group, 1984), 33-34.

all of which affect family stability.[1]

Hastings concurred. He noted that there are few inter-tribal marriages in East African towns but a lot more inter-tribal temporary unions. For people who have a settled occupation, legal marriage gives them status, and they may become stable. But for populations of shanty towns and poor high-density population areas with high unemployment, marriage of any kind is at its highest risk.[2]

Decline of Polygamy

Polygamy decreases in urban areas. It is more expensive to live in towns due to the cost of housing and food. An extra wife in a rural area contributes to food production, but in town this may not be so. With scarce resources wives may compete for assistance from the husband for their children, resulting in resentment and conflict.[3]

From Extended to Nuclear Family

Lloyd associated the Western nuclear family system to the industrial system:

> Changes in family structure are closely correlated with the process of modernization and industrialization. Sociologists, indeed, often argue that the nuclear family is a necessary concomitant of industrial society.

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[1]Ibid., 33.

[2]Hastings, 40, 41. On temporary unions in African urban areas see also David J. Parkin, "Types of Urban African Marriage in Kampala," in Africa and Change, ed. Colin M. Turnbull (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 208-226.

[3]Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 33-34.

> Only when the nuclear family is isolated from the wide
> groupings of kin and descent, it is held, can there be
> the geographical mobility that is essential if men are
> to move from one job to another. . . . Only in the
> nuclear family can a man pursue his occupational goals
> free from claims by his kin.[1]

Lloyd's argument is that the African traditional

(extended) family cannot rightly function in the urban

industrial context. Modern African cities and their

industrial systems with a Western taste create new

circumstances, and to function in them implies several

compromises by the African.

Cultural Change

Kofi Busia in The Challenge of Africa expressed the

influence of industrialization on African culture in the

following words:

> Industrialization is not only a factor in cultural
> change, it is also an outcome of the process of cultural
> change. There is a constantly operating relationship
> between human interaction and the occupational patterns
> and technology of society; they are interdependent, and
> social organizations change as a consequence of changes
> in occupations and technology.[2]

The changes brought about by industrialization,

according to Busia, create a new hierarchy of social values;

roles change with the acquisition of new statuses; wealth

and power also come with new social standards and expecta-

tions which no longer correspond with traditional systems.

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[1]P. C. Lloyd, Africa in Social Change (Baltimore:
Penguin Books, 1967), 171.

[2]Kofi A. Busia, The Challenge of Africa (New York:
Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 130.

Economic and Social Influences

The strongest economic and social changes in Africa were a result of the era of Western colonization and its aftermath. These changes influenced the direction of family relations in Africa. In this vein Kofi Busia observed:

> The colonization of Africa by European powers brought African peoples into contact with peoples who had ways of life different from their own. Contacts between human beings evoke mutual responses, and the peoples of Africa have responded to the incursion of colonial powers in every aspect of their lives . . . economic, political, social, religious, and also aesthetic. Consequently, there has been culture change. From the relationships and social changes that came into being during the period of colonization, contemporary Africa has emerged.[1]

The Africa that emerged out of the colonial era is one of contrasts. It has the rural and the urban, the poor and the rich, the literate and the illiterate. Although African society had contrasts before colonization, the ones colonization helped to create were more glaring and brought along changes in the value system of Africans.[2]

Traditional African Markets

Marquet described how the new economic changes affected the traditional African market:

> Markets of the traditional type . . . were very pleasant places. There people met friends, exchanged news, heard the latest domestic and political scandals, and intrigued for the favors of important people or of a woman, all among the cheerful buzz of conversation, vibrant colors in the bright sunshine. . . . Strictly economic transactions only accounted for very small

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[1]Ibid., 56.

[2]Asana, 88.

quantities of goods in the local markets since the parties to a deal had only a very small surplus, their possibilities were very limited. But to prolong the pleasure, they would haggle and bargain and try not to get rid of their saleable merchandise too quickly.[1]

Although open-air markets still exist in Africa, they are not the same thing as the traditional African markets where trade was by barter. In today's pecuniary economy, people tend to be less personal in their business dealings with each other. Making profit seems to overshadow the social aspect of the exchange which existed before—where markets strengthened the social network, interpersonal relations were more important than the sale of merchandise.

Transforming and Weakening Traditional Institutions

Exodus from the rural areas to towns in search of jobs left the urban peoples cut off from their extended family. Under such conditions it became difficult for town dwellers to respect traditional norms. One example is the application of marriage payments in the urban context. Marquet observed that

bridewealth has been degraded into a purchase price which is haggled over, and has largely lost its original meaning, which was to guarantee to the wife-giving lineage the possibility of later obtaining another potential child-bearer. Urban conditions lead to individual-type marriage where payment of bridewealth seems like an antiquated relic of agrarian Africa.[2]

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[1]Jacques Maquet, <u>Power and Society in Africa</u> (New York: McGraw-Hill Books, 1971), 23.

[2]Ibid., 82.

Migration to Towns, Leading to Unstable Families

Wage-labor arose as part of the changes brought about by the cash economy. Workers were needed on railroads, houses, plantations, and later in factories. People had to earn money to pay taxes and obtain goods and services.

Mostly the men migrated; in some places, colonial governments did not permit women to travel without written permission from their husbands. Furthermore, female migration was discouraged because women were thought of as keepers of the homestead. As a result, women had to adjust to the male absence by taking on the husband's duties or relying on hired labor for more difficult tasks. Men also started forming new families in towns and never went back to the villages; prostitution and other forms of irregular sexual unions became common. Thus migration caused unstable families.[1]

Assimilation of Western Culture

Western systems of production and distribution introduced in Africa carried with them cultural implications. New skills were transmitted by the new jobs, and the creation of new jobs transformed the nature of individual ambition and occupational aspirations. The urban location of industries induced urban migration from rural

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[1]Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 37.

areas leading to further modifications in cultural patterns of life. The money economy created new ambitions of accumulation of surplus and the construction of commercial empires. Thus capitalism eroded aspects of African traditional fellowship and collective life. Mazrui summarized this phenomenon thus: "Economic forces created by new processes of production and distribution have been the hallmarks of Africa's assimilation into the world economy and western culture."[1]

Effects of Western Education

At the forefront of traditional African education was character formation. Social virtues were passed on to the younger generation. Their education concerned training young people to become responsible adults in the community. It prepared them to appreciate the dignity of labor as they worked alongside their kin. Their education made them ready and responsible future wives and husbands. This education taught endurance, the capacity to be self-supporting and yet cooperative as a member of the community.

Traditional African forms of education prepared students for their own land. Young people learned to appreciate their roots; they learned from their elders and grew up appreciating their culture.[2]

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[1]Ali A. Mazrui, The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 65.

[2]Asana, 94.

On the contrary, the changes introduced by Western systems of education have helped to alienate the young generation from their cultural roots. First, the teaching is more theoretical than practical. Some of the subjects are abstract, and the students question how they would ever apply those theories in daily life. Second, the new system of education focused students' attention on a foreign way of life rather than their native home; the language of instruction, sometimes the teacher, and the syllabi were foreign. Most African students to this day must first learn English, French, or Portuguese as mediums of communication in schools. The system begins to alienate the students subconsciously from their native language and culture. Third, gathering students away from their homes for long periods of time contributes to cutting links between them and their cultural roots. The physical separation the young people experience makes them miss the informal teaching which they could receive through close association with their families. This brings about disintegration of families, as the values of the younger generation exhibit significant contradictions with those of the older generation.[1]

Mbiti voiced his concerns about the effects of the Western education system on African family and society:

> One serious drawback in modern African family life is the fact that whereas under the traditional setup both

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[1]Ibid., 95.

boys and girls receive prepatory education concerning marriage, sex and family life, especially during and after their initiation rites, modern schools give little and often no such prepatory education. These schools spend more time teaching young people about dissecting frogs and about colonial history than they ever spend teaching them how to establish happy homes and family lives. Unless this structure and system of education is changed, we are heading for tragic social, moral and family chaos whose harvest is not far away.[1]

Unfortunately Mbiti did not propose changes in the education system to help avert the social crisis. But the developments that he mentioned are evident. A number of educated Africans, for example, could be described as cut off from their traditional system and yet not fully integrated into Western culture. Marriages and divorces of Africans who have had Western education are taking on more and more of the patterns of the West. Even some African men do not like marrying university graduates for fear that such marriages will not last.

Religious Influences

Before the coming of foreign religions to Africa, traditional African religions had some common features which influenced the nature of family life. For example, African religions tended to pervade all African life, unlike Christianity which seems to have limited relationship to daily life. From death to birth--all events of the lifecycle were associated with religion. Marriage and procreation were regarded as religious obligations: prayers

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[1]John S. Mbiti, <u>African Religions and Philosophy</u> (New York: Praeger, 1969), 277.

and religious ceremonies accompanied engagements and
marriages, so that God and the ancestors might bless the
union with children.

Close relationships were maintained between the
living family members and the ancestors. There were
elaborate ceremonies to enable the living to maintain ties
with the dead kin members. In some African societies when a
man died it was important for him to have children born in
his name (levirate marriage); those children would be
regarded as his and would keep his memory alive.

When there were misfortunes in the community, people
atoned to the dead to appease their spirits so as to avert
the calamity--believing that the dead were angered by the
behavior of the living relatives. Maintenance of family
shrines was believed to be crucial to the peaceful
continuance of family life. Ancestors were believed to
discipline family members if they neglected family duties or
were disrespectful to older members.[1]

The Spread and Influence of Christianity

Christianity spread through most of Africa during
the colonial period. Early missionary contacts were
sometimes negative. With little knowledge of the values of
Africans, many missionaries denounced sacrifices to
ancestors, betrothal customs, levirate marriage, polygamy,
many types of songs and dances, initiation ceremonies, and

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[1]Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 45.

bridewealth. Such denunciations over time did undermine traditional customs and beliefs which had hitherto protected married life and kinship relationships.[1]

The positive contributions of Christianity on marriage and family have to be recognized. Asana observed that even if Christianity brought a disturbance of society and its values, it also brought new values of its own which helped the stability of marriage. For example, Christian faith improved the treatment of women: missionaries encouraged the education of girls as much as that of boys; Christian churches fought against child betrothal, wife abuse, poor treatment of widows, and making fortunes of marriage payments.[2]

The Spread and Influence of Islam

Islam has been seen by some as more adaptable to African traditional beliefs than Christianity. Muslims were permitted to practice polygamy, and strict adherence to Islamic rites was not demanded. As a result, many traditional customs were combined with Muslim rites.[3]

The spread of Islam meant the introduction of Islamic law with its elaborate codes governing family relationships and moral behavior. For example, it forbade

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[1]Ibid., 46-49.

[2]Asana, 98-100.

[3]Arye Oded, Islam in Uganda (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 234.

adherents of Islam to practice levirate marriage; it stipulated punishments for infraction of moral codes such as illicit sex; Muslim women were to be secluded from contact with male non-family members;[1] Islamic law did not allow women to inherit property. Eventually Kenya and Uganda had to give statutory recognition to Islamic Law--'The Mohammedan Marriage, Divorce and Succession Ordinance'-- enacted in Kenya in 1920.[2]

The Impact of African Independent Churches

The formation of many of the independent churches was brought about by the rejection of African culture and customs by the mainline Christian churches. The majority of the customs were directly related to marriage and family. Polygamy, for instance, is accepted in most independent churches. These churches have incorporated more of African culture into their belief systems. They put more emphasis on conversion than on the details of church doctrine.[3]

Marital Instability

A study was conducted by Januario Nabaitu[4] et al. in

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[1]The rule of seclusion of women in order to protect them from evil influences was loosely adhered to in the case of Ganda Muslims, whose women are seldom veiled or physically secluded.

[2]Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 45-46.

[3]Ibid., 49.

[4]Januario Nabaitu, Cissy Bachengana, and Janet Seeley, "Marital Instability in a Rural Population in South-West Uganda: Implications for the Spread of HIV-I

1989/90 to examine people's beliefs about the causes of marital instability in a rural district of southwest Uganda (Masaka district). Most of the population are Baganda living in dispersed settlements and trading centers. The most common causes suggested for marital instability were sexual dissatisfaction, infertility, alcoholism, and mobility. HIV infection was not mentioned as a direct cause of separation, but a small independent study revealed that seven out of ten couples separated on learning of a positive HIV test result of one or both partners. Although marital instability is not uncommon in this population, there was ample evidence found that the spread of HIV infection is making the situation worse.

Alcoholism

Respondents reported that excessive alcohol consumption leads to decreased sexual inhibitions and/or decreased sexual energy--either of these caused marital discord. Alcoholism also leads to neglected family responsibilities, squandered family resources, and erosion of respect and trust between partners. Drunkenness is also said to lead to quarrels and fights.[1]

Sexual Dissatisfaction

Both male and female respondents reported that

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Infection," Africa 64, no. 2 (August 1994): 243-251.

[1]Ibid., 245.

sexual satisfaction was vital to the marriage relationship; lack of it could cause a woman to run back to her relatives. Some emphasized the importance of sexual satisfaction by noting that when financial gain was not the motive in pre- or extra-marital sex, men and women stick to those who satisfy them sexually.

They also noted a prevalent ignorance in matters of sexuality and attributed it to the obliteration of the traditional paternal aunt's duty of instructing youth on the subject. This custom is reportedly dying out due to condemnation by Christian missionaries that it was pagan and primitive. As a result young people enter into marriage uninformed about sexuality; they pick up bits of information from peers during casual conversation or from cinema halls and romantic novels.[1]

Infertility

Infertility is not very common in the region, but when it occurs, it almost always leads to dissolution of marriage because children are highly valued in Ganda culture. Marriage is not complete without a child born from the relationship.

According to common beliefs, the causes of infertility include: A curse (ekikolimo) by parents who were not shown respect; divinities (lubaale) may also cause infertility if not respected; witchcraft (eddogo) from

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[1]Ibid., 245-247.

envious partners or stepmothers who do not wish their stepchildren to have children; excessive pre-marital sex by women; abuse of contraceptive drugs by women; physical abnormalities are also believed to cause barrenness, their local terminologies are nnabbuguma--a condition of having too much heat in the uterus, omusayi obutasiimagana-- 'discordant blood' of partners may be causing infertility.

Whatever the reasons for infertility, when a couple is childless, infidelity becomes a feature of the family as each partner engages in extra-marital sex to prove him or herself fertile. It was reported by respondents in the region that if a couple is childless, relatives usually blame the woman. Therefore her friends pressure her to get an extra-marital partner.[1]

<div align="center">Mobility</div>

Some men spend long periods of time away from home, trading or conducting business in towns. They may feel lonely and so get lovers in trading centers and get involved in extra-marital sex. Their wives in return may feel neglected materially and sexually and start to form liaisons with men in order to obtain the necessities of the home. Therefore mobility affects the sexual behavior of marriage partners and may ultimately lead to marital breakdown.[2]

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[1]Ibid., 248.

[2]Ibid., 247.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

All respondents to the study expressed fear that extra-marital sexual behavior can lead to sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS--commonly called <u>slim</u>, (<u>olumbe</u>) death, (<u>akawuka</u>) small insect, (<u>mukenenya</u>) sucker until one dries up. Other diseases mentioned were (<u>enziku</u>) gonorrhea, (<u>kabotongo</u>) syphilis, (<u>ebirigoya</u>) sores around genital area, (<u>kisipi</u>) herpes zoster, and other skin diseases.

Fear of contracting these diseases is a factor in unstable marriages. Women may leave their husbands because of their extra-marital affairs; women may also be divorced for similar fears.[1]

The Changing Pattern of Marriage and Family Life

Causes of Change

Arthur Phillips saw the cause of the above mentioned changes as the effect of modern contacts on African marriage customs and family life. He summed up his views thus:

> Once the age-old rhythm of life in a small closely knit society was disturbed, once the individual African was enabled to place himself outside the effective range of traditional controls, it could not be expected that the customary system of marriage and family life would long survive unchanged. The extent of the changes has tended to vary according to the degree of contact with the outside world and the strength with which external influences have brought to bear on indigenous institutions.[2]

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[1]Ibid., 247-248.

[2]Arthur Phillips, "Survey of African Marriage and Family Life," in <u>African Marriage and Social Change</u>, ed.

In addition Hastings proposed that the traditional system of marriage is in the course of breakdown partly because many of its presuppositions and sanctions have been removed and partly because new influences are producing new attitudes to life and marriage among young people. He also pointed out that for nearly one hundred years Christian missionaries forbade some customs and practices and insisted on the adoption of others by nationals.[1]

Hastings mentioned four other causes for the changing pattern of marriage in Africa. First, that formal education has diminished the power of custom and authority of the elders. Second, the functions of the extended family have diminished: Young people move to towns and are far from their elders; clan discussions and ceremonies are hard to carry out because everyone is scattered; functions of the extended family are now passed on to the local government, clergy, and cooperatives. His third observation is that there are considerable opportunities for women to become economically independent--they are teachers, they work as secretaries, or factory workers--affecting the basic relationship between the sexes. New economic opportunities and new standards suggested at school are combining to bring about women's rebellion against and liberation from the male-controlled society hitherto taken for granted. Last,

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Lucy Mair (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1969), xiii-xiv.

[1]Hastings, 37-38.

Hastings noted that in urban areas the traditional pattern of marriage and way of life in general have broken down, yet some parts of the countries have not been affected as much.[1]

Mair analyzed the agencies of social change that have altered marriage trends by comparing pre-colonial conditions with the modern period. She believed that greater freedom is allowed to women today in East Africa because of the influence of Western European ideas, modern economic developments, and increased mobility. As a result, men have less control on the behavior of their wives whereas in pre-European times wives were answerable to their husbands. Women have economic independence now. They can earn their own incomes. In pre-European times women depended on their husbands for economic support. Now women are less dependent on the marriage partnership for their economic necessities. Coupled with all these factors is the availability of faster and cheap means of transport, making it easy for a woman to disappear from her husband's control and go live with a man of her choice in a clandestine marriage.[2]

All the above factors have weakened traditional sanctions against a breach of marital norms and made it easier for men and women to stay together without observing traditional requirements of making marriage payments.

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[1]Hastings, 40-41.

[2]Mair, <u>Native Marriage in Buganda</u>, 33.

Marriage Less Collective, More Individual

Mair revealed that because of the increase in personal freedom in all spheres of life, due to increased communication between communities, the African village is no longer an isolated self-contained world in which an individual's welfare depends on the goodwill of the rest and on conformity with accepted rules.[1]

The consequence of the above situation is that marriage is becoming increasingly a matter of personal choice rather than an arrangement between kin groups. The authority of parents is decreasing and amounts to nothing more than formal consent. Where marriage is made legal by payments, the husband is coming more and more to be expected to provide this from his own resources, with less help from his kin.

The wife's kin have become less involved in her marriage relationship as guarantors of her good conduct or as her protectors against the husband's abuse. As a result, the wife depends mostly on her own resources for strengthening her position in the husband's clan and family. The wife seems to be in a weaker situation than before when her family took more active interest in the success of the marriage by a series of customary counter-gifts and general obligations of hospitality, which kept up the goodwill of the husband's kin. But at the same time this situation has

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[1]Mair, <u>African Marriage and Social Change</u>, 67.

resulted in marriage becoming a more personal relationship, and the family more of an independent unit.[1]

Mair admitted that as a result of Africa's contact with the West there has been a "diminishing importance of the collective or group aspect of marriage. Emphasis is shifting to the individual aspect of marriage as a relationship between two persons."[2] He also accepted that a marriageable girl in Africa today is more assertive in the choice of a husband. Furthermore, women also challenge the customary notion that marriage involves the permanent transfer to the husband's kin of the woman's person and reproductive powers.

Concerning marriage payments Mair saw the current marriage contracts as tending to acquire the finality of a cash transaction, especially since marriage payments have been abused and lost much of their symbolic significance. Because exorbitant amounts are often demanded as marriage payments, young men are agitating against continuance of the institution.[3]

Choice of Partner

While Hastings noted that there is far more personal choice of a marriage partner than in the past, he cautioned

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[1]Ibid., 68.

[2]Ibid., 69.

[3]Ibid.

that there is a steady growth of marriages by elopement and a good deal of illegitimacy.[1]

Marriage Payments

Today the position of the marriage payments has been transformed: It is still essential in validating the marriage contract; it remains the reason for calling the ceremony at which the suitor is introduced and at which the consent of the woman is formally expressed. However, it is no longer the legal instrument which keeps the marriage contract in being.[2]

The character of the marriage payments has changed also. In the past it was a payment from the bridegroom's kindred to the bride's people--symbolizing the relationship between two lineages--today it is frequently no more than a payment from one person--the bridegroom--possibly assisted by his parents, to one man--the bride's father. It is now predominantly paid in money, and in some places the sum has escalated.[3]

Substitution of Cash for Marriage Payments

The substitution of cash for some or all the marriage payments has led to abuses of this formality. Fathers of brides ask for the highest payment attainable and end up

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[1]Hastings, 38.

[2]Mair, Native Marriage in Buganda, 21-22.

[3]Hastings, 38.

spending it on personal gratification rather than in making a new marriage (for a son) as it used to be with cattle. Moreover relatives of the bride regard the gifts due to them as a right by virtue of their status rather than as a token binding them to an interest in the maintenance of the marriage.

Mair also pointed out that the increased demands for marriage payments are becoming a deterrent to marriage to young people, especially where there are no effective sanctions against unlegalized cohabitation. Young men who cannot afford the payments demanded end up eloping and forming unions without the consent of their families and in the absence of usual customary ceremonies.[1]

Harriet Ngubane reported on the transformation of African marriage resulting from monetization of marriage payments. She affirmed that converting marriage payments or lobolo from cattle into money alters the meaning and character of the whole transaction. The change is mostly marked in towns, but it also occurs in rural areas. First, the transaction becomes privatized and individualized in that the participation of a larger kinship group is minimized or eliminated.[2]

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[1]Mair, African Marriage and Social Change, 68.

[2]Harriet Ngubane, "The Consequences for Women of Monetization of Marriage Payments in a Society with Patrilineal Descent," in Transformation of African Marriage, ed. David Parkin and David Nyamwaya (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 173.

Second, the _lobolo_ transaction becomes commercial-
ized in that an actual money price is named, the bride's
father's investment into the daughter's education is
considered in coming up with the amount. Therefore the
concern in traditional marriage negotiations to avoid the
determining of _lobolo_ turning into a buying and selling
exercise is undermined. The bride becomes in effect a
commodity, losing her value as a person.[1]

Third, monetization of _lobolo_ results in the dis-
carding of former ritual and ceremonies and has the effect
of trivializing marriage. One function of ritual is solem-
nizing an event to impress its importance to the partici-
pants so as to cause the obligations which arise from the
new relationship to be internalized. The desolemnization of
marriage by reducing the ritual intensity reduces commitment
of the parties to the marriage and to its preservation.[2]

Ngubane made a point that Mair and Phillips also
made.[3] She suggests that privatization of _lobolo_ results in
a marriage which is more private and the family it creates
is more of a nuclear one than would have otherwise been the
case. Many relatives who would have been involved and given
obligations in the marriage now take no part in it.

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[1]Ibid., 174.

[2]Ibid., 180.

[3]Mair, _African Marriage and Social Change_, 69;
Phillips, "Survey of African Marriage and Family Life,"
xii.

Formerly the new marriage created a fresh household within a larger kinship unit. The consequence is that the marriage does not receive support from the kinship group.[1]

Wedding Rites

There is an increasing abandonment of the customary sequence of rites and observances accompanying a marriage celebration. The gap is being filled by the adoption of what are perceived to be aspects of a European wedding--emphasizing expenditure on display and entertainment. Such developments are particularly evident in areas where Africans are detached from their traditional associations such as urban centers.[2] For educated Africans the cost of marriage has increased tremendously because of the standard of display expected at weddings. The costly wedding is an index of social status. This trend results in the idea that a Christian wedding should include all the elements that characterize a European wedding.[3]

After the church ceremony, the couple and guests gather at a suitable place for a party where a mixture of modern and traditional music is played and bottled drinks are served. After the party the couple may go for a honeymoon to some large East African city like Nairobi or

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[1]Ibid., 180-181.

[2]Phillips, xiii.

[3]Mair, _African Marriage and Social Change_, 152-155.

Mombasa, or they may take their "honeymoon" (<u>kisenge</u>) in their new home.[1]

Other changes observed by Kyewalyanga are that today virginity of the bride has lost its importance; men are not even looking for it. Many girls today have sexual relations by their early teens. Furthermore, he noted that role of the paternal aunt has lost its importance. Formerly she was an adviser of the bride. Many girls today marry without the assistance of their paternal aunts. Also the bridesmaid today need not be the bride's sister; the bride's friend or any distant relative may be chosen to act.[2]

Decline in Church Marriage Rates

There is tension in present-day African Christian marriages--the institution is being torn apart between the claims of the gospel, the claims of African tradition, and the claims of modernity. Church people are opting out of the Christian form of marriage, which the church's attitude has implied is the only form. At the same time social changes are taking place, especially the emancipation of women and the growth of urban society, breaking down traditional marriage patterns.

Hastings noted in his report a steady decline in

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[1]Mere N. Kisekka, "The Baganda of Central Nganda," in <u>Cultural Source Materials for Population Planning in East Africa: Beliefs and practices</u>, ed. Angela Maluos, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), 3:154.

[2]Kyewalyanga, 153-154.

church marriages in Uganda.[1] Among the reasons individuals
gave for the omission or deferment of church marriage were
the following:

1. It can be very expensive to have the social
accessories that go with a church wedding; marriage feasts
cost lots of money.

2. The only church in which marriage can be
solemnized may be very far away.

3. Church marriage is felt to be too irrevocable,
and some people are afraid to commit themselves once and for
all.

In his report, Hastings attempted to analyze the
causes of declining marriage rates.[2] First, he attributed
the decline to a change in the political atmosphere. Many
countries of Africa became independent around the 1960s.
The re-Africanization of society, the cultural revolution, a
greater interest in what is traditional than in what had
been imported from Europe--all of these tendencies might
have caused people not to want church marriage. Second, the
member/pastor ratio in Africa puts pastoral efficiency under
strain. The shortage of pastors hinders the imaginative
development of other types of ministry. Too much is left to
be done by the priest, especially when the pastor has no
better transportation than a bicycle. If members live many

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[1]Hastings, 50.

[2]Ibid., 51-53.

miles from the main church--where the pastor lives and marriages are solemnized--and the pastor rarely visits that church, it is difficult to see why one should go through the trouble and expense of having a wedding at the church when one can have a customary wedding in one's own village.

Increasingly, both pastor and communion are becoming peripheral to Christian life in many parts of rural Africa, and church marriage falls in the same category. In other words, there are many people who would like to have a church wedding if this could be arranged, but they put it off because of the trouble involved. If a pastor were available to talk to people about it, then many people would do it, but this does not happen.

A fourth cause affecting church marriage in Africa is wide social unrest. Increasingly the alternative to a church marriage is not a recognized customary marriage but a temporary liaison. If it works, it may later be formalized with payment of bridewealth and even a church ceremony--or it may continue as a good common-law marriage. Further, on the point of social unrest, Hastings noted that authorities--tribal or ecclesiastical--are increasingly being challenged. Because the old bonds of society have been weakened, towns keep growing, and traditional patterns of behavior become less compulsory or normative for young people.

Changes in Customs

Marriage customs in Uganda have been changing due to
contact with European culture, the effect of European
colonial laws, and the influence of Christianity. Some
customs have survived such as marriage payments. And the
persistence of such customs is evidence of their value in
native eyes.[1]

In-law Avoidance (Obuko)

Elaborate in-law avoidances (obuko) are a prominent
aspect of married life. Avoidance relationships such as not
touching or looking directly into each other's face and not
sleeping under the same roof are practiced between a man and
his daughter-in-law and also between a woman and her son-in-
law. Breach of such avoidance is believed to strike the
offender with palsy. These observances are meant to deter
sexual attachments between relatives. But today, especially
in urban centers, such avoidances result in practical
inconveniences and are kept only during ceremonial
occasions.[2]

Exogamy

Clan rules of exogamy are increasingly being
disregarded--for example not marrying from one's mother's
clan or not marrying first or second cousins. Inter-tribal

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[1]Mair, Native Marriage in Buganda, 9.

[2]Kisekka, 154-155.

marriages are also becoming common and accepted without protest from the parents, especially if either of the couple is educated.[1]

Age of Marriage

Large families are no longer an economic advantage. Marriage has ceased to be an economic necessity. Thus young men postpone marriage till their late thirties.[2]

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[1]Ibid., 154.

[2]Mair, <u>African Marriage and Social Change</u>, 67-69.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPING FUNCTIONAL SUBSTITUTES

FOR GANDA MARRIAGES

Introduction

Describing the challenge facing the church in Africa

Eitel declared:

> African Christianity is several centuries old, yet at
> its heart it is still foreign to many Africans. . . .
> The reason much of African Christianity is left
> untouched is because the Bible has rarely been
> communicated without a western approach. It is time for
> us to encourage African churches to analyze their own
> culture and lifestyle according to biblical standards.[1]

The Christian God is represented in the Bible as

desiring to communicate to mankind. It is observed in the

Bible that God's communication takes into account the

cultures in which people are wrapped; God communicates to

them through the channel of their culture. For example, God

revealed Himself to the Hebrew people in terms of the Hebrew

language and culture.

African Christians Caught Between
Two Worlds

Wallbank rightly pointed out that since the onset of

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[1]Keith Eitel, "The Transcultural Gospel: Crossing
Cultural Barriers," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 23, no. 2
(April 1987): 137.

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African independent movements, the African

> tribal loyalties, ancient gods, and family customs are
> either being swept away or drastically weakened by the
> impact of a new culture. . . . Is the African fated to
> lose the old culture that once gave meaning and
> direction to his life, without being able to assimilate
> the alien culture of the west? If this last be true,
> the African would become a man between two worlds, no
> longer of the old, but unable to be part of the new.[1]

It appears that this prophecy has come true. The

African is indeed caught between two worlds. Missionaries

mistakenly transplanted a Western form of Christianity, and

as a result Africans have had difficulties allowing the

gospel to penetrate their lifestyle. The solution is for

the African church to use biblical principles to evaluate

its cultural norms. And according to Eitel, "Those elements

of African society and tradition that are compatible with

the gospel should be encouraged in order to create a

distinctly African expression of Christianity."[2]

How does a Christian decide which elements of

culture are good and constructive and which should be

condemned? Ukpong divided these elements of culture into

three groups: those that have a positive affect on society,

those with a negative effect, and those that are inhumane.[3]

1. Generally, the positive elements contribute to

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[1]Thomas W. Wallbank, Contemporary Africa: Continent
in Transition (Princeton: Van Nostrand Press, 1956), 12-13.

[2]Eitel, 131-132.

[3]Justin S. Ukpong, "Inculturation: A Major Challenge
to the Church in Africa Today," African Ecclesial Review 38,
no. 5 (October 1996): 258-266.

the welfare of society, promote good human relations, and are geared toward communication between human beings and God. Such indigenous practices used to be transformed by the gospel; they need to be understood in the light of the Christian faith. This will enable those indigenous institutions to foster new perceptions and expressions of the Christian faith that are African and lead to authentically African interpretations and expressions of the Christian faith.

2. Those with a negative effect on society are beliefs that have antisocial objectives which do not promote the welfare of the society, for example, beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession. The mainline churches have approached these beliefs with an intellectual interpretation and have ended up in ignoring them or treating them as unreal. But to the Africans they are real and are a serious threat to their Christian faith. The charismatic Pentecostal churches and African indigenous churches take these beliefs seriously and approach them openly either as a case for exorcism or accommodation, respectively. The mainline churches need to learn from them; they need to add to their approach extensive research into these beliefs.

3. Inhumane social practices tend to unjustly oppress and marginalize some people within society, for example, subjugation of women and intra-ethnic discrimination. Such practices must be challenged by the gospel and eradicated. The church must denounce them as

unjust and against Christ's message of love.

Human cultures are a mixture of good and bad and are in need of transformation. The Bible is the appropriate judge of all cultures.[1] Those elements of culture that violate scriptural norms are to be discarded or changed. On the other hand, elements that are compatible with biblical standards ought to be endorsed and encouraged.

Mbiti appreciated the challenge faced by the African Christian and agreed with Eitel's observation:

> Culture does not cleanse itself of its own impurities; it does not rescue itself from decay and deformities. Culture has its demons, which only the gospel is equipped to exorcise and disarm. . . . I do not advocate a rejection of our culture by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[2]

Crucial questions that an African Christian needs to ask about cultural customs were suggested by Eitel:

1. Does the custom violate any clear scriptural teaching?

2. Does it destroy any part of the individual's person (physical, mental, spiritual)? (1 Cor 6:19-20).

3. Does it cause a weaker believer or non-believer to hesitate in coming closer to Christ? (Rom 14:13-23; 1 Cor 6-10).

4. Does it glorify God? Can one ask God's blessing

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[1]Eitel, 131-132.

[2]John S. Mbiti, "Christianity and African Culture," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 20, no. 1 (September 1977): 36-37.

on it?   (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).[1]

Dealing Biblically with Cultural Customs

How could the Ugandan Christian deal with cultural customs, including marriage practices? There are three possibilities:[2] (See fig. 1)

1. Denial of custom. A Ugandan Christian could reject all cultural customs on the grounds that they are pagan as taught by pioneer missionaries. However, the wholesale rejection of culture is bound to cause some problems as it did during the missionary era. First, it left a cultural vacuum that needed to be filled and thus was filled by imported customs of the missionaries. As a result, Christianity became regarded as a foreign religion and African converts as aliens in their own country. Second, the rejected customs simply went underground. For example, Christians could conduct formal Christian weddings in the church and then go to the village for the traditional celebrations. And it is known that when traditional customs are practiced in secret, they combine with Christian teachings to form a syncretistic mix of Christian and non-Christian beliefs. Third, the wholesale rejection of culture prevented growth. It turned church leaders into

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[1]Eitel, 135.

[2]Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 184-190.

The Gospel regarded ——————————— Gospel is
as foreign   rejected

Denial of
Marriage Custom

                              Marriage Custom goes ——————————— Syncretism
                                    underground

Beliefs
Rituals, Customs   Critical Acceptance — 1) Gathers —— 2.) Study —— 3) Evaluate —— 4) Create ——Context-
of Customary   of Marriage Custom   information   biblical   custom in   a new   ualization
Marriage   about a   teaching   light of   context-
                                              custom   about   biblical   ualized
                                                              custom   teaching   Christian
                                                                                         practice

Uncritical Acceptance ————— Syncretism
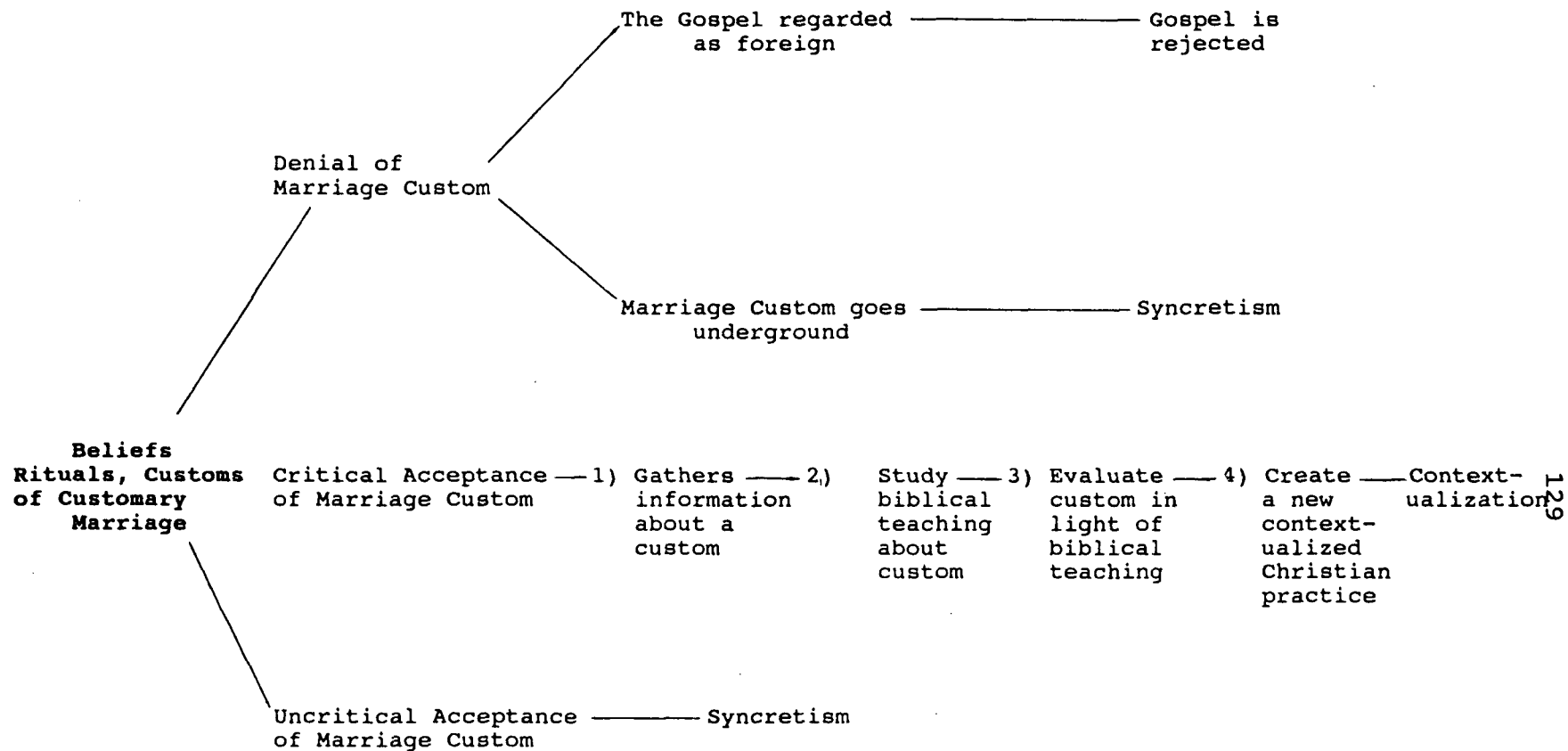of Marriage Custom

Fig. 1. Three possible approaches to dealing with a chosen marriage custom.
         Adapted from Paul G. Hiebert, <u>Anthropological Insights for Missionaries</u> (Grand Rapids:
         Baker Book House, 1985), 188.

police but denied the people involved a right to make their own decisions and an opportunity to grow spiritually.

This approach does not seem to be a viable option.

2. <u>Uncritical acceptance of custom</u>. Another response to traditional practices is to accept them uncritically into the church. Although this approach tries to minimize change in the life of the new converts, it has serious weaknesses. First of all, it overlooks the fact that there are corporate sins as well as individual ones. Sin can be found in the institutions and practices of a society. The gospel of Christ calls individuals, societies, and cultures to repentance. Second, this approach opens the door to syncretism or paganism. As new converts grow, they need to constantly test their beliefs and practices against the norm of the Scriptures. This aspect is missing in uncritical acceptance of culture. These weaknesses make the second approach questionable.

3. <u>Critical acceptance of custom</u>.[1] This approach is biblical and will lead to the creation of customs that fit the local context. In this approach, cultural beliefs and customs are neither rejected nor accepted without examination. They are first studied with regard to the

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[1]Bruce Bradshaw, <u>Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom</u> (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1993), 60-62. According to Bradshaw the process of critical contextualization includes four consecutive principles: (1) Understand what the people believe about the problem; (2) Create a bridge between Scripture and the problem; (3) The people evaluate their customs in the light of Scripture; (4) Practice the contextualized ethic.

meanings and places they occupy within their cultural setting, then evaluated in the light of Scripture. How does this process take place?

    a. First, local church leaders lead the congregation in uncritically gathering information on the marriage customs in question. The purpose is to understand the custom, not to evaluate it.

    b. Next, the pastor leads the church in a Bible study related to the marriage custom under consideration.

    c. The congregation then corporately evaluates the marriage custom in the light of biblical understanding and makes a decision on how to observe the custom. The people, not the pastor, make the final decisions so that they will willingly enforce them. This way there will be little likelihood that the custom they reject will go underground (see fig.).

Eitel added an important element to the process of critical contextualization, namely, comparing and contrasting the practices of the Bible with those of culture.[1] When dealing with the custom of lobolo or marriage payments, for example, the parallels between Old Testament practice and African practice should be explored, noting both the similarities and the contrasts.

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[1]Eitel, 136.

Tienou agreed with this approach, and pointed out:

It is, of course, correct to note that human commonality makes parallels inevitable between the Bible and other religious traditions. Nevertheless the differences should not be overlooked. Proper hermeneutics must wrestle with both parallels and differences. This will allow the Word of God to have a corrective function as well as being grafted onto sound points of contact.[1]

Ways Congregation May Respond to a Marriage Custom

There are various ways that a congregation may respond to the marriage custom:

1. They may keep a custom that is biblical.

2. Other customs will be explicitly rejected as inappropriate for Christians.

3. On the other hand, the people may modify a custom by giving it Christian meaning.

4. The church may sometimes substitute a Christian symbol borrowed from another culture in the place of the one they reject. Substitutes of this kind (referred to as functional substitutes) are often effective because they minimize the cultural void created by removing an old custom.

5. The church may also create a new symbol or ritual to communicate its Christian belief in a form that is indigenous to the local culture.

After the pastor has led the people to analyze their

[1]Tite Tienou, "The Church in African Theology," in Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization, ed. D. A. Carson (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 161.

marriage customs in the light of Scripture, he or she must help the members arrange the practice they have chosen into a new marriage ritual that expresses the biblical meaning of marriage. Such a ritual will be Christian (for it seeks to express biblical teaching) and contextual (for the church has created it using forms that the people understand).

Safeguards Against Wild Interpretations

What safeguards are there to prevent wild interpretations of Scriptures concerning customs? First, the Bible is taken by those engaged in the process as the final and definitive authority for Christian beliefs and practices.

Second, those using this approach should recognize that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of all believers to guide them in understanding and applying the Scriptures to their own lives.

Third, there should be a constant check with the wider church community. The priesthood of all believers should not be taken as a license for lone-rangering. Exegesis and hermeneutics are corporate processes. Perhaps this is where there is a need for checking with Christians from other cultures to help the members see whether their cultural biases have distorted their interpretation of Scripture.

Examples of Ganda Marriage Customs
That Need to Be Contextualized

Choice of Partner

Marriage, according to Ganda culture, is not an arrangement between individuals but an arrangement between two families. This helps toward the stability of the new household. The church should aim at building upon this foundation. This view is supported by the results of the survey.

Researching Marriage Partners

In a customary Ganda marriage each family tries to find out as much as possible about not only the person who is going to be married to the son or daughter but also of the general background of the opposite family. That basic knowledge gathered has increased the stability and happiness of the marriage. It is regrettable that marriage today is often undertaken in haste. The church should aim at preserving this insistence on mutual knowledge and understanding, and it should discourage hasty marriages.

Marriage Payments

One of the advantages of marriage payments in a customary marriage was that when it was paid, the marriage was regarded as having been agreed upon and concluded by both partners and their families. As the results of the survey indicated marriage payments should be retained in some symbol which would seal the contract and witness to the

solemnity of the union being entered into. This symbol could be in the form of an exchange between the two partners or their families, as a present or covenant token, and it would be followed by the Christian marriage rite.

Teaching Young People About Marriage

Many Ganda Christian young people who marry these days do not understand what Christian marriage is about. They are not given much guidance on the choice of a partner, courtship, or what it takes to have a successful marriage, especially because of the gradual disappearance of the traditional role of <u>ssenga</u>, or paternal aunt in marriage.

The church should consider how to prepare young people for marriage and give them positive teaching so that they may understand what Christian marriage really is. The teaching should be given along the following lines:

1. <u>Biblical</u>: To impart a clear understanding and knowledge of God's purpose for the institution of marriage.

2. <u>Physical</u>: To impart knowledge of the functions of the body.

3. <u>Psychological</u>: To impart the understanding of the working of the mind and heart in the relationship of man with woman.

4. <u>Sociological</u>: That young couples may understand their relationship with the community.

Good literature on marriage should also be made available to young people. Parents also need to be involved

in teaching their youngsters about marriage as one of their primary duties.

Young people of marriageable age will be greatly helped toward the choice of a partner by being given opportunities to meet in youth fellowships, rallies, lectures, clubs, social events, choirs, and others.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions
from the study and to make recommendations to the church.

Conclusion

There is a need to establish a marriage pattern in
the church in Uganda that is genuinely African, yet
biblical. Such a pattern has to be relevant to the Ugandan
situation. It has to respond to the felt needs and problems
of the people and foster marriage stability. The church has
to intentionally plan to educate its members about the
process of integrating the tenets of biblical marriage with
the constructive aspects of customary marriage.

Recommendations

I wish to make the following recommendations to the
Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda:

1. The church should give itself with greater
urgency to the task of educating its members at every level
concerning the nature of Christian marriage. In order to do
so the church should consider taking the following steps:

    a. The church should initiate and create liter-
    ature on Christian marriage relevant to the Ugandan

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context and make it available to the members through
church school libraries and Adventist Book Centers.

b. The Seventh-day Adventist Church should
cooperate with mass media and other churches in
educating the populace on marriage and family life
and in studying marriage problems and discovering
solutions to them.

c. The church should facilitate the development
of marriage and family life departments at union,
conference, district, and congregational levels.

2. The church should critically assess her current
understanding of customary marriage, noting the functions of
the various customs and how they contribute to the stability
of marriage.

a. The church should examine the positive
aspects of the different stages of customary
marriage and incorporate them into church marriage.

b. Marriage payments should not be condemned
because of the prevailing abuse; they should be
retained and Christianized into tokens of a covenant
that binds the partners and their families.

c. The church should biblically challenge
marriage practices which violate clear scriptural
teaching by presenting sound teaching and engaging
the members in developing suitable functional
substitutes.

The church's order of marriage service should be

revised so as to include familiar cultural symbols and ceremonies.

A Suggested Order of Marriage[1]

Rationale for Suggested Marriage Order

First, marriage in Africa, unlike in the western societies, is not a matter of the spouses alone, but is largely an agreement uniting two families into a special relationship through the marriage of two individuals. This provision ensures the stability of the new family. So a ceremony which does not meaningfully involve the families is discouraged.

Second, in order for the marriage rite to be meaningful to Africans, it ought to include familiar cultural symbols. For this reason the ring as a symbol of unending love is rejected. It does not have any symbolism in the Ganda culture, and it is also inappropriate for men or women to wear because of the kind of work they do.

Third, there is no reason why the marriage order should not feature a prayer asking for children, since it is usually uppermost in the minds of the families concerned. Having children is one of the most important purposes for marriage in the Ganda culture.

Fourth, the couple is usually already considered as married before they present themselves to be joined by the

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[1]This is one person's idea of what a contextualized marriage order would look like.

minister as long as they satisfied all customary
requirements. So the church marriage should be regarded as
solemnizing of an already existing customary marriage. The
Christian marriage order would be given mainly to emphasize
the need to have God in the home.

Suggested Marriage Order

First, the couple to be married sits on two chairs
in front of the pastor who is to perform the marriage
ceremony. Directly behind the bride sit her brother, her
father and mother, and her aunt. And behind the groom sit
his father and mother, and two or three relatives. In the
third row behind the parents sit the matron and bridesmaids
(one of whom has to be her younger sister), the best man and
groom's men.

The ceremony begins with the pastor offering a
prayer for God's guidance. The pastor then addresses the
respective parents and relatives of the bride and groom. He
asks them if they agree to enter into a relationship with
the family of the new spouse. When the answer is in the
affirmative, the pastor reminds them that they are going to
be the primary support system of the couple getting married.

Then the pastor addresses the couple and asks them
individually if they are willing to enter into a marriage
relationship and fulfill all the responsibilities which
pertain to it. When the answers are affirmative the pastor
addresses the matron, bride's maids, best man and groomsmen

by asking two questions: whether there are any reasons why the couple should not be married, and whether they are willing to guide and support the couple to be married. After receiving affirmative answers to these questions, the pastor prays that God will be witness and give them grace to do as they have stated.

The wedding vows used in the ceremony are essentially the same as those used in western churches.

At the close of the vows, the pastor requests the two fathers to come forward, each with a cup of water. The fathers pour the water into an empty cup which the pastor holds. The pastor then explains that just as the water from the two cups is no longer separable, the two families have become joined and are no longer separable as a result of the marriage. The pastor then offers the water to both the bride and the groom. They both drink from the same cup thus sealing their contract of union.

A special prayer is offered asking God to bless the new union, especially with children.

A special song is sung to bring the ceremony to a close.

3. The church should adopt the principles of critical contextualization in dealing biblically with marriage practices and other customs.

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